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L E C T U R E S  
ON THE  
C A T E C H I S M  
OF THE  
CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

*England. Ch. of  
Catechism*

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By WILLIAM GILPIN, M. A.  
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S E C O N D E D I T I O N .

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M.DCC.LXXXI.

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TO THE  
YOUNG GENTLEMEN,  
WHO HAVE BEEN EDUCATED AT  
CHEAM SCHOOL.

GENTLEMEN,

THE following Lectures upon the Catechism of the Church of England, have little pretence to expect attention from the generality of readers, who are furnished with many better helps. But as they were composed for your use; and as several of you, at different times, have desired copies of them; they may, aided by your partiality, perhaps meet with a

more favourable reception among you. They accost you with the familiarity of an old acquaintance; and hope to get admittance, and whisper a few serious truths, when wiser instructors are neglected.

I have endeavoured, in some degree, to give them a better form, than that plain one, in which you knew them. I have abridged them also, as I would not trespass too much upon your hours of leisure or business; and should be sorry to fatigue your patience as a friend, though I have been sometimes, perhaps, obliged to do it as a master.

On the evidences of our religion, and the great doctrines of Christianity, it hath been my chief endeavour to engage your attention. If the mind be deeply impressed with these leading truths, it requires only  
a slighter

[ v ]

a slighter lesson on morals. Faith, we know, was the great point in preaching the gospel; and he who seriously believes it, cannot well fail of being a good Christian.

I have endeavoured, in the course of these Lectures, to shew you, that scarce any of the great truths of the gospel were so wholly new, but that some notices of them, or at least resemblances, may be traced even among the heathen nations—among those, which were more polished especially; and perhaps among all, if we were more intimately acquainted with them: and as this shews either a great harmony between reason and revelation; or, that these preparatory notices originated immediately from the Deity; it always appeared to me an argument, that carried

great conviction. If we even suppose, these notices to have been wholly of Jewish origin, still the unforced adoption of them, shews strongly their agreement with reason; and therefore opposes strongly the endeavours of those, who labour to set reason and revelation at variance.

In this light, a late very ingenious, and distinguished writer, seems to build a part of his theory upon false ground; when he tells us, that from the New Testament *may be extracted a system of religion, entirely new, both with regard to the object, and the doctrines of it; and totally unlike every thing, which had ever before entered into the mind of man\**.

In pressing moral rules, I have sometimes rather chosen a quotation from Ho-

\* See Mr. Jenyns's Inter. Evid. p. 17.



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race, than a text from scripture. In one sense, he is better authority than an apostle. If his unenlightened mind had such just and noble sentiments, what may be expected from a Christian?

It was some inducement to me, Gentlemen, in publishing these papers, to leave in your memory a testimony of that earnestness, with which I always wished to press upon you the great truths of religion, and virtue. These, without any disparagement to human literature, ought certainly to be the first objects of education. Where one miscarries for want of learning, numbers miscarry for want of principles.

I have, with great satisfaction, seen many of you, as you came forward in life, filling your several stations, with propriety



and credit: and it is one of the greatest pleasures of my retirement, to think, I shall daily see many more. A few mortifications too I have had. But there is some ground, at least, to hope, that where good principles have been early inculcated, they may, sooner or later, revive: and should these lectures contribute, in any degree, to that purpose, they will have answered one of my principal ends.

That these, or any other means, may enable you to see your real, and most important interests in life, and to pursue them steadily, is, with great affection, and earnestness, the constant wish of

Your very sincere Friend,

And most obedient Servant,

WILLIAM GILPIN.

Vicar's Hill, near Lymington,  
Jan. 6, 1779.

A  
CATECHISM;  
THAT IS TO SAY,  
AN INSTRUCTION  
TO BE LEARNED OF EVERY PERSON,  
BEFORE HE BE BROUGHT TO BE CONFIRMED  
BY THE BISHOP.

CAT BUCHISM

AMERICAN

THE LATTER OF EVERY

REPORT HE IS FOUND TO BE

BY THE

A

C A T E C H I S M, &c.

*Question.*

**W**HAT is your name?

*Answ.* N. or M.

*Quest.* Who gave you this name?

*Answ.* My godfathers and godmothers in my baptism; wherein I was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.

*Quest.* What did your godfathers and godmothers then for you?

*Answ.* They did promise and vow three things in my name: First, that I should renounce the devil, and all his works, the pomps and vanity of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh. Secondly, that I should believe all the articles of the christian faith. And thirdly, that I should keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of my life.

*Quest.*

*Quest.* Dost thou not think that thou art bound to believe, and to do, as they have promised for thee?

*Answ.* Yes verily; and by God's help so I will. And I heartily thank our heavenly Father, that he hath called me to this state of salvation, through Jesus Christ our Saviour. And I pray unto God to give me his grace, that I may continue in the same unto my life's end.

*Catechist.* Rehearse the articles of thy belief?

*Answer.*

I BELIEVE in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth :

And in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried, he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic church; the communion of saints; the  
for-



forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

*Quest.* What dost thou chiefly learn in these articles of thy belief?

*Answ.* First, I learn to believe in God the Father, who hath made me and all the world;

Secondly, in God the Son, who hath redeemed me, and all mankind;

Thirdly, in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth me, and all the elect people of God.

*Quest.* You said that your godfathers and godmothers did promise for you, that you should keep God's commandments: Tell me how many there be?

*Answ.* Ten.

*Quest.* Which be they?

*Answer.*

THE same which God spake in the twentieth chapter of Exodus, saying, I am the Lord, thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

I. Thou shalt have none other gods but me.

II. Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image, nor the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth. Thou shalt

shalt not bow down to them, nor worship them: for I the Lord, thy God, am a jealous God, and visit the sins of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and shew mercy unto thousands in them that love me, and keep my commandments.

III. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord, thy God, in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

IV. Remember that thou keep holy the sabbath day. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all that thou hast to do: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord, thy God. In it thou shalt do no manner of work, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, thy man-servant, and thy maid-servant, thy cattle, and the stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it.

V. Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord, thy God, giveth thee.

VI.

VI. Thou shalt do no murder.

VII. Thou shalt not commit adultery.

VIII. Thou shalt not steal.

IX. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

X. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his servant, nor his maid, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is his.

*Quest.* What dost thou chiefly learn by these commandments ?

*Answ.* I learn two things; my duty towards God, and my duty towards my neighbour.

*Quest.* What is thy duty towards God ?

*Answ.* My duty towards God is, to believe in him, to fear him, and to love him with all my heart, with all my mind, with all my soul, and with all my strength: to worship him, to give him thanks, to put my whole trust in him, to call upon him, to honour his holy name and his word, and to serve him truly all the days of my life.

*Quest.* What is thy duty towards thy neighbour ?

*Answ.* My duty towards my neighbour is, to love him as myself, and to do to all men,

as I would they should do unto me. To love, honour, and succour my father and mother. To honour and obey the king, and all that are put in authority under him. To submit myself to all my governors, teachers, spiritual pastors, and masters. To order myself lowly and reverently to all my betters. To hurt nobody by word or deed. To be true and just in all my dealings. To bear no malice or hatred in my heart. To keep my hands from picking and stealing; and my tongue from evil speaking, lying, and slandering. To keep my body in temperance, soberness, and chastity. Not to covet, nor desire other men's goods; but to learn and labour truly to get my own living; and to do my duty in that state of life, unto which it shall please God to call me.

*Catechist.* My good child, know this, that thou art not able to do these things of thyself, nor to walk in the commandments of God, and to serve him, without his special grace; which thou must learn at all times to call for by diligent prayer. Let me hear therefore, if thou canst say the Lord's prayer?

*Answer.*

OUR Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name: thy kingdom come: thy will be



be done in earth, as it is in heaven: give us this day our daily bread: and forgive us our trespases, as we forgive them that trespass against us: and lead us not into temptation: but deliver us from evil. Amen.

*Quest.* What desirest thou of God in this prayer?

*Answ.* I desire my Lord God, our heavenly Father, who is the giver of all goodness, to send his grace unto me, and to all people; that we may worship him, serve him, and obey him, as we ought to do. And I pray unto God, that he will send us all things that be needful both for our souls and bodies; and that he will be merciful unto us, and forgive us our sins; and that it will please him to save and defend us in all dangers ghostly and bodily; and that he will keep us from all sin and wickedness, and from our ghostly enemy, and from everlasting death. And this I trust he will do of his mercy and goodness, through our Lord Jesus Christ: and therefore I say, Amen. So be it.

*Question.*

How many sacraments hath Christ ordained in his church?

a

*Answ.*



*Ans.* Two only, as generally necessary to salvation; that is to say, baptism, and the supper of the Lord.

*Quest.* What meanest thou by this word *Sacrament*?

*Ans.* I mean an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given unto us; ordained by Christ himself, as a mean whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof.

*Quest.* How many parts are there in a sacrament?

*Ans.* Two: the outward visible sign; and the inward spiritual grace.

*Quest.* What is the outward visible sign, or form in baptism?

*Ans.* Water: wherein the person is baptized, *in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*

*Quest.* What is the inward and spiritual grace?

*Ans.* A death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness: for being by nature born in sin, and the children of wrath, we are hereby made the children of grace.

*Quest.*

*Quest.* What is required of persons to be baptized?

*Answ.* Repentance, whereby they forsake sin; and faith, whereby they stedfastly believe the promises of God, made to them in that sacrament.

*Quest.* Why then are infants baptized, when by reason of their tender age they cannot perform them?

*Answ.* Because they promise them both by their sureties: which promise, when they come to age, themselves are bound to perform.

*Quest.* Why was the sacrament of the Lord's supper ordained?

*Answ.* For the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ; and of the benefits which we receive thereby.

*Quest.* What is the outward part, or sign of the Lord's supper?

*Answ.* Bread and wine; which the Lord hath commanded to be received.

*Quest.* What is the inward part, or thing signified?

*Answ.* The body and blood of Christ; which are verily and indeed taken, and received by the faithful in the Lord's supper.

*Quest.*

*Quest.* What are the benefits whereof we are partakers thereby?

*Answ.* The strengthening and refreshing of our souls by the body and blood of Christ; as our bodies are by the bread and wine.

*Quest.* What is required of them who come to the Lord's supper.

*Answ.* To examine themselves, whether they repent them truly of their former sins; steadfastly purposing to lead a new life; have a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of his death; and be in charity with all men.

## LECTURE I.

History of the catechism—general contents of it—baptismal vow—use of sponsors—name given in baptism—substance of the vow—renunciation of sin—faith—obedience—connection between them—St. Paul's doctrine with regard to faith, explained—promises made, on God's part, upon our keeping the vow—divine assistance necessary.

B

IT





**I**T was among the earliest cares of the first promoters of the reformation, to provide a catechism for the instruction of youth. But the same caution, with regard to the prejudices of men, was necessarily to be used in this matter, as had been used in all the other religious transactions of those times. At first, it was thought sufficient to begin with such common things, as were acknowledged equally by papists and protestants. The first catechism therefore consisted simply of the creed, the ten commandments, and the Lord's prayer: and it was no easy matter to bring even these into general use. They were received by the people, in the midst of that profound ignorance, which then reigned, as a species of incantation; and it was long before the grossness of vulgar conception was even enlightened enough to apprehend, that the creed, the ten commandments, and the Lord's prayer, meant simply to direct their faith, their practice, and their devotion.

This was all the progress, that was made in catechetical instruction from the beginning of the reformation, till so late a period as the year

1549. About that time a farther attempt was made by archbishop Cranmer, as it is commonly supposed. He ventured to add a few cautious explanatory passages; which was all the prejudices of men would yet bear. The great prudence indeed, of that wise and good man, appeared in nothing more, than in the easy movements, with which he introduced every change.

In the year 1553, a farther attempt was hazarded. A catechism was published by authority, in which not only the creed, the ten commandments, and the Lord's prayer were more fully expounded; but a brief explanation also of the sacraments was added. This bold work, however, was not ventured in the English tongue; but was published in Latin, for the use of schools. Archbishop Wake\*, whose authority I chiefly follow, supposes this catechism to be the first model of that, which is now in use.

Thus the matter rested, till the reign of Elizabeth. In the mean time, the violent measures of her predecessor, had tended greatly

\* See the dedication to his commentary on the church catechism.

to open an inquisitive temper in the age; and to abolish its prejudices. Men began to have some notion of thinking for themselves; and it was no longer necessary to observe that extreme caution, which had hitherto been observed, in addressing them on religious subjects. The catechism therefore was now improved on a more liberal plan; and having undergone several reviews, was at length published by authority, nearly in its present form, in the year 1563. It ought to be mentioned, that the person principally concerned in this work, was Nowel, dean of St. Paul's.

From this short history of the catechism, the various forms it underwent, and the care and caution employed in composing it, we need not wonder at finding it, what it really appears to be, a judicious, and comprehensive summary of the principles, and doctrines of the christian religion.

It begins with a recital of our baptismal vow, as a kind of preface to the whole. It then lays down the great christian principle of faith; and leaving all mysterious inquiries, in which this subject is involved, it passes on to the rules of practice. Having briefly recited these, it con-

cludes with a simple, and very intelligible explanation of baptism, and the Lord's supper.

The catechism then begins very properly, with a recital of our baptismal vow, as the best preface to that belief, and those rules of practice, in which that vow engaged us.—But before we examine the vow itself, two appendages of it require explanation—the use of sponsors—and the addition of a name.

With regard to the sponsor, the church probably imitates the appointment of the legal guardian, making the best provision it can, for the pious education of orphans, and deserted children. The temporal and the spiritual guardian may equally betray their trust: both are culpable: both accountable: but surely the latter breaks the more sacred engagement.

As to promising and vowing in the name of another, (which seems to carry so harsh a sound) the sponsor only engages for the child, as any one would engage for another, in a matter, which is manifestly for his advantage: and on a supposition, that the child hereafter will see it to be so—that is, he promises, as he takes it for granted, the child itself would have promised, if it had been able.

With



With regard to the name, it is no part of the sacrament; nor pretends to scriptural authority. It rests merely on ancient usage. A custom had generally obtained, of giving a new name, upon adopting a new member into a family. We find it common among the Greeks, the Romans, and the Jews: nay, we read that even God himself, when he received Abram into covenant, giving an early sanction to this usage, changed his name to Abraham. In imitation of this common practice, the old christians gave baptismal names to their children, which were intended to point out their heavenly adoption, as their surnames distinguished their temporal alliance.

From considering the use of sponsors, and of the name, in baptism, we proceed next to the vow itself, which is thus expressed.

“ My godfathers did promise three things in  
 “ my name: 1st, That I should renounce  
 “ the devil, and all his works, the pomps  
 “ and vanities of this wicked world, and all  
 “ the sinful lusts of the flesh. 2dly, That  
 “ I should believe all the articles of the  
 “ christian faith; and 3dly, That I should  
 “ keep God’s holy will, and commandments,

“ and walk in the same all the days of my  
“ life.”

First then, we promise to “ renounce the  
“ devil, and all his works, the pomps and  
“ vanities of this wicked world, and all the  
“ sinful lusts of the flesh.” “ The devil,  
“ the world, and the flesh,” is a comprehensive mode of expressing every species of sin, however distinguished; and from whatever source derived: all which we not only engage to renounce as far as we are able; but also to take pains in tracing the labyrinths of our own hearts; and in removing the glosses of self-deceit. Without this, all renunciation of sin is pretence.

Being thus enjoined to renounce our gross, habitual sins, and those bad inclinations, which lead us into them; we are required next to “ believe all the articles of the christian faith.” This is a natural progression. When we are thoroughly convinced of the malignity of sin, we in course wish to avoid the ill consequences of it; and are prepared to give a fair hearing to the evidence of religion. There is a close connection between vice, and infidelity. They mutually support  
each

each other. The same connection subsists between a well-disposed mind, and the truths of religion: and faith perhaps is not so involuntary an act, as many of our modern philosophers would persuade us.

After "believing the articles of the christian faith," we are lastly enjoined to "keep God's holy will and commandments." Here too is the same natural progression. As the renunciation of sin prepares the way for faith, so does faith lead directly to obedience. They seem related to each other, as the mean and the end. "The end of the commandment," saith the apostle, "is charity, out of a pure heart, and good conscience, and faith unfeigned." Faith, (which is the act of believing upon rational evidence,) is the great fountain, from which all christian virtues spring. No man will obey a law, till he hath informed himself whether it be properly authorized: or, in other words, till he believe in the jurisdiction that enacted it.—If our faith in Christ doth not lead us to obey him; it is what the scriptures call a dead faith, in opposition to a saving one.

To

To this inseparable connection between faith and obedience, St. Paul's doctrine may be objected, where he seems to lay the whole stress on faith, in opposition to works\*.—But it is plain, that St. Paul's argument requires him to mean by faith, the whole system of the christian religion, (which is indeed the meaning of the word in many other parts of scripture;) and by works, which he sets in opposition to it, the moral law. So that, in fact, the apostle's argument relates not to the present question; but tends only to establish the superiority of christianity. The moral law, argues the apostle, which claimed on the righteousness of works, makes no provision for the deficiencies of man. Christianity alone, by opening a door of mercy, gave him hopes of that salvation, which the other could not pretend to give.

Upon renouncing sin, believing the articles of the christian faith, and keeping God's holy commandments, as far as sinful man can keep them, we are intitled by promise to all the privileges of the gospel. We “ become

\* See Rom. iii. 28. and indeed great part of the epistle.



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“ members of Christ, children of God, and  
“ inheritors of the kingdom of heaven.” We  
are redeemed through the merits of Christ;  
pardoned through the mercies of God; and  
rewarded with a blessed immortality.

This account of our baptismal vow concludes with a question, leading us to acknowledge the necessity of observing this vow; and to declare our belief, that our only hope of keeping it rests upon the assistance of God.

Having considered our baptismal vow, or the prefatorial part, we come now to the body itself of the catechism; which naturally divides into the two great branches of the vow, faith, and obedience—the first as contained in the creed; the second in the commandments.



## LECTURE II.

History of creeds—three creeds established in our church—the apostles creed—analysis of it—authenticity of scripture proved—from a chain of the earliest writers, mentioning, and quoting them—from the enemies of christianity acknowledging their existence—from the rejection of forged gospels and epistles—from their various translations—from reading them in public assemblies—from their internal evidence—argument against their adulteration, from the jealousies of different sects—objections answered.

WHEN

# LECTURE II.

History of creeds—three creeds established in  
our church—the Nicene creed—the Apostles Creed—  
its authenticity established—proofs from  
a chain of the earliest writers—monks  
and quoting their own authorities of  
early writers acknowledging their existence—  
from the reputation of foreign popes and  
councils—from their various statements—  
from reading them in public assemblies—  
from their internal evidence—argument  
against their addition from the fact that  
of different times—opinions and views.



**W**HEN the purity of the christian religion became mingled with human inventions; and sectaries, instead of judging from the whole tenor of the gospel, built their narrow systems upon detached parts—then it was that different churches thought it necessary to frame creeds, with an intention to distinguish articles of faith from matters of opinion: and the primary idea of a creed was merely to bring these articles together, from various parts of scripture, into one point of view.

But as corruption spread, and different churches began to found different systems on the same articles; then each church thought it necessary to proceed a step further; and to enlarge its creed by explanations; with a view to shew, in what sense it received each article; or, in other words, to draw a line between itself, and such churches, as it thought held unscriptural tenets.—Hence, we may easily suppose, that many of these creeds were as absurd, as the various opinions, which gave them birth: and hence the creeds, even of the purest churches, became clogged with explanatory clauses; which if they had  
their

their use in some cases, produced mischief in others.—This is the short history of creeds.

In our church, three of these ancient creeds are retained—that authenticated by the council of Nice—the Athenasian—and that which is commonly, though improperly, called the Apostles creed. As to the Athenasian creed, it has given great offence to many well-meaning persons, by the damnatory clauses with which it is guarded; though, in fact, these make no part of the creed itself; but rest solely with the author of it. The apostles creed, however, is chargeable with nothing of this kind: it hath stood the test of ages; and (unless in one or two obscure passages) hath been ever thought unexceptionable.

This creed was composed before any of the subtilties of the doctrine of the trinity were introduced; which tend more to create animosity amongst men, than to amend their hearts. In it we simply declare our belief in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost—in the scripture account of the life, and sufferings of Christ—in the redemption of the world from sin—in the resurrection of the dead—and in the eternity of a future state.

But

But before we enter upon the examination of these points, as we shall have frequent occasion, in the course of it, to appeal to the New Testament, it seems natural, first to prove the authenticity of the several books of which it is composed. I shall just therefore touch the heads of argument, made use of in this proof.

A series of christian writers, Irenæus, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Clement, Origen \*, and others, who lived in the ages succeeding those of the apostles, and whose writings are still extant, agree in declaring those books, which compose the canon of scripture, as now settled, to have descended regularly from the apostolic times.

The very originals indeed of some of them appear to have been preserved, till the third century; for Tertullian, who died at the

\* The reader will find these proofs at large, in Whitby's general introduction to the gospels and epistles; and in Jenkins's reasonab. of christianity, vol. ii. c. 4. He will find likewise proofs in favour of St. Matthew's gospel, the epistle to the Hebrews, and some other parts of scripture, which were not at first so universally received.

close of the second, seems to appeal to them, as then existing \*.

In those early ages the authenticity of scripture was universally acknowledged, both by friends and enemies. Celsus, Julian, and all the eminent anti-christians of those days, no more disputed the authenticity of scripture, than we do that of the koran. Their objections to the one, and our objections to the other, run in a different channel. On this head no disputes were ever heard of; nor any interruption in the regular chain of evidence.

When indeed could a forgery have been introduced? In whatever age we suppose it to have been attempted, we cannot imagine men would have received a book of such consequence, unless the authenticity of it had been confirmed by the tradition and practice of preceding ages—by the testimony of such writers, as record the history of those times—by the observance of those rites and ceremonies, which confirm, and commemorate the religion it pro-

\* *Percurre ecclesias apostolicas, apud quas ipsa authenticæ literæ eorum recitantur, sonantes vocem, & repræsentantes faciem uniuscujusque.*



mulges—in short, by those very marks of authenticity, which it now possesses; and which it could not have possessed, unless it had been written at the time it pretends.

Besides, many gospels and epistles appeared in different ages of the church; and though some of them had a very evangelical cast, and were writings of intrinsic value, yet they were rejected by all christians, only because they could not produce proofs of their authenticity.

But besides these common marks of authenticity, the scripture hath others peculiar to itself. It was translated into all languages: it was every where dispersed: it was carefully preserved in churches, and other public places: it was read not only in private, but universally in the assemblies of the people: its friends had the highest veneration for it, as it contained the charter of all their hopes; and its enemies held it in the utmost aversion, as it combated all their worldly schemes, and pretensions. Nay to such a degree of rancour were its adversaries animated, that they often endeavoured to destroy it utterly; which it is not probable they would have attempted, if they could have shewn it to have been spuri-

ous: this would certainly have been a more liberal, as well as a more effectual mode of rejection.

To the external evidence, in proof of the authenticity of scripture, may be added no little degree of strength from its internal evidence. The simplicity of the writers, and of the writings correspond. There is the same agreement between the several parts of each book, and the general scheme of christianity.

An appeal also is often made to extraordinary gifts, which, in those early times, were exercised in the church: and surely no impostor would have been forward in making such an appeal, if no such gifts had been known.

Different persons likewise, who were then alive, are mentioned; which afforded a very unnecessary hint for a detection, if no such persons had existed.

In many of St. Paul's epistles also a variety of rites, and customs are alluded to, as then in use, which in the next age, after the destruction of Jerusalem, are known to have been totally abolished.

But though the scripture could not be forged, might it not have been adulterated?

This

This seems impossible from the variety of sects, which sprang up in the earliest times of christianity. As these, in general, persecuted each other, they would undoubtedly have joined in clamour against any one sect, which had ventured to receive a portion of scripture as genuine, which was not universally acknowledged.

Objections, though of no great force, have been made to scripture, from the disagreement found among the ancient copies of the New Testament.

But this disagreement consists, in general, of mere grammatical niceties. In one copy, a particle is added, which is omitted in another. Of this sort are the greater part of the various readings of the New Testament: and it could not well be otherwise. Inaccuracies of this kind are unavoidable; and may indeed argue inattention in the transcriber; but are surely no argument against the authenticity of the book.

The objector argues with more weight, when he alledges, what he calls, the contradictions of scripture. One of the sacred writers tells us, that our Saviour ordered his disciples, when

they preached, to take slaves: another, that he ordered them to take none. This affirms, that at the resurrection two angels were seen; that mentions only one. And he who will be at the pains of comparing attentively all the evangelical accounts, must be obliged to acknowledge, they are far from being perfectly harmonious.—Now, where we find such manifest contradictions, what are we to say? Is there any dependence upon books, in which they are found?

In answer to this objection, it might perhaps be no difficult matter to shew, that these contradictions do not really exist; and that the passages, which are imagined to contain them, may be reconciled. But giving the objection its force, it has no tendency to overthrow the veracity of the sacred writings: it rather indeed concludes in favour of them; inasmuch as it shews, there was no collusion among the writers. Such little variations affect neither the doctrine, nor the history. The doctrine is clearly consistent throughout; and the history is evidently, in all its material circumstances, the same.

But



But where is your inspiration then? If the spirit of God directs, it will direct even the minutest truth.

If it only preserve from error in matters of importance, it is surely sufficient. To suppose more, would be to conceive very grossly of inspiration.

Having thus endeavoured to establish the authenticity of scripture, we might rest the proof of the several articles of our creed on its sole authority. But as it is one of the various pleas of scepticism to set reason and scripture at variance, it will perhaps be more satisfactory to carry our reason along with us in the discussion of these proofs; and rest them, as we may do in all cases, except where our reason is incapable, on rational evidence, as well as on scriptural authority. Both reason, and scripture have their origin from the same great being; and therefore there must be at least, so much harmony between them, as that one can never contradict the other.

...where is your objection? Is the  
spirit of God direct, it will direct even the  
meanest man.  
It is only private, first in order of  
importance, it is fairly settled. The reason  
more would be to conceive very grossly of in-  
spiration.  
Having this established to establish the na-  
ture of inspiration, we might test the proof  
of the several articles of our creed on its basis  
and so forth. But as it is one of the various pleas  
of inspiration to let reason and scripture agree  
in all things, it will perhaps be more satisfactory to  
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much harmony between them, as that one can  
never contradict the other.

### LECTURE III.

Being of a God proved—from the creation of the world, implying design in the whole, and all its parts—from the uniformity observed in the preservation of it—from the universal consent of mankind, whether we suppose it founded on tradition; or consider it as the result of men's own reasoning—atheistical objections from individuals professing atheism—from the apparent injustice of God's government—these objections answered—for just notions of the deity, recourse must be had to scripture.

THE

## LECTURE III.

Being of a God proved—from the reason of  
the worth, dignity, &c.—to the whole  
and all its parts—from the universal con-  
fession in the pretension of it—from the  
universal consent of mankind, whether we  
suppose it founded on tradition; or consider  
it as the result of man's own reasoning—  
abstracted, objections from individuals pro-  
testing themselves—from the apparent injustice  
of God's government—their conduct as an  
example—for just notions of the deity, re-  
course must be had to Scripture.



**T**HE creed begins with a profession of our belief in “ God the Father almighty, “ maker of heaven and earth.”

The being of a God is one of those truths, which scarce require proof. A proof seems rather an injury, as it supposes doubt. However, as young minds, though not sceptical, are uninformed, it may not be improper to select out of the variety of arguments, which evince this great truth, two or three of the most simple.

The existence of a deity, we prove from the light of nature. For his attributes, at least in any perfection, we must look into scripture.

A few plain and simple arguments drawn from the creation of the world—the preservation of it—and the general consent of mankind, strike us with more conviction, than all the subtilties of metaphysical deduction.

We prove the being of a God first from the creation of the world.

The world must have been produced either by design, or by chance. No other mode of origin can be supposed. Let us see then with which of these characters it is impressed.

The ,

The characteristic of the works of design, is a relation of parts, in order to produce an end.—The characteristic of the works of chance is just the reverse.—When we see stones, answering each other, laid in the form of a regular building, we immediately say, they were put together by design: but when we see them thrown about in a disorderly heap, we say as confidently, they have been thrown so by chance.

Now, in the world, and all its appendages, there is plainly this appearance of design. One part relates to another; and the whole together produces an end. The sun, for instance, is connected with the earth, by warming it into a proper heat, for the production of its fruits; and furnishing it with rain and dew. The earth again is connected with all the vegetables, which it produces, by providing them with proper soils, and juices for their nourishment. These again are connected with animals, by supplying them with food. And the whole together produces the great end of sustaining the lives of innumerable creatures.

Nor is design shewn only in the grand fabric of the world, and all its relative appendages; it is equally shewn in every part. It is seen in  
every

every animal, adapted in all its peculiarities to its proper mode of life. It is seen in every vegetable, furnished with parts exactly suited to its situation. In the least, as well as in the greatest of nature's productions, it is every where apparent.

If then the world, and every part of it, are thus marked with the characters of design, there can be no difficulty in acknowledging the author of such design—of such amazing contrivance, and variety, to be a being of infinite wisdom and power. We call a man ingenious, who makes even a common globe, with all the parts of the earth delineated upon it. What shall we say then of the author of the great original itself, in all its grandeur, and furnished with all its various inhabitants?

The argument drawn from the preservation of the world, is indeed rather the last argument advanced a step farther.

If chance could be supposed to produce a regular form, yet it is certainly beyond the highest degree of credulity, to suppose, it could continue this regularity for any time. But we find it has been continued: we find, that near 6000 years have made no change in the order  
and

and harmony of the world. The sun's action upon the earth hath ever been regular. The production of trees, plants, and herbs, hath ever been uniform. Every seed produces now the same fruit it ever did. Every species of animal life is still the same. Could chance continue this regular arrangement? Could any thing continue it but the hand of an omnipotent God?

Lastly, we see this great truth, the being of a God, witnessed by the general consent of mankind. This general consent must arise either from tradition, or it must be the result of men's own reasoning. Upon either supposition, it is an argument equally strong. If the first supposition be allowed, it will be difficult to assign any source of this tradition, but God himself. If the second, it can scarce be supposed, that all mankind, in different parts of the world, should agree in the belief of a thing, which never existed. For though doubts have arisen concerning this general belief; yet it is now pretty well ascertained, from the accounts of travellers, that no nation hath yet been discovered, among whom some traces of religious worship have not been found.

Be



Be it so, says the objector; yet still we find single persons, even in civilized countries, and some of them men of enlarged capacities, who have not only had their doubts on this subject; but have proclaimed aloud their disbelief of a divine being?

We answer, that it is more than probable, no man's infidelity on this head was ever thoroughly settled. Bad men, rather endeavour to convince themselves, than are really convinced.—But even on a supposition, that a few such persons could be found\*, what is their testimony against so great a majority, as the rest of mankind? The light of the sun is universally acknowledged, though it happens, that now and then, a man may be born blind.

But since, it seems, there are difficulties in supposing a divine creator and preserver of the world, what system of things does the atheist

\* One of the most remarkable anecdotes of atheism is related of a person at Rome, who, it is said, was condemned for his infidelity; but had his life repeatedly offered, if he would acknowledge a deity. He refused, and suffered death with constancy. Mandeville, and Voltaire both glory in this hero, as destroying the whole testimony of martyrs. If the fact be true (though I know not on what evidence it rests), one would suspect his understanding was injured; as the whole history of mankind perhaps affords not another such instance.

suppose

suppose attended with fewer? He sees the world produced before him. He sees it hath been created; and is preserved. Some account of this matter must be given. If ours displease him; let us have his.

The experiment hath been tried. We have had many atheistical creeds; none of which hath stood the test of being handed down with any degree of credit into future times.

The atheist's great argument indeed against a deity, is levelled at the apparent injustice of his government. It was an objection of ancient date; and might have had its weight in heathen times: but it is one of the blessings which attends christianity, that it satisfies all our doubts on this head; and gives us a rational, and easy solution of this poignant objection. What if we observe an inaccurate distribution of the things of this world? What if virtue be depressed, and vice triumphant? It is nothing, says the voice of religion, to him, who believes this life to be an inconsiderable part of his being; a point only in the expanse of eternity: who believes he is sent into this world, merely to prepare himself for a better. This world, he knows, is intended  
neither

neither for reward, nor punishment. Happiness unquestionably attends virtue even here; and misery, vice: but it is not the happiness of a splendid station; but of a peaceful mind: nor is it the misery of low circumstances, but of a guilty conscience. The things of this world are not, in their own nature, connected either with happiness or misery. Attended sometimes by one, and sometimes by the other, they are merely the means of trial. One man is tempted with riches, and another with poverty; but God intends neither an elevated, nor a depressed situation as the ultimate completion of his will.

Besides, if worldly prosperity even was the indication of God's favour, yet good men may have failings, and imprudencies enough about them to deserve misfortune; and bad men virtues, which may deserve success. Why should imprudence, though joined with virtue, partake of its reward? Or the generous purpose share in the punishment, though connected with vice?

Thus then we see the being of a God is the universal creed of nature. But though nature could investigate the simple truth, she could

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not preserve it from error. Nature merely takes her notions from what she sees, and what she hears; and hath ever moulded her gods in the likeness of things in heaven, and things on earth. Hence every part of the creation, animate, and inanimate, hath, by turns, been an object of worship. And even the most refined nations, we know, had gross conceptions on this head. The wisest of them indeed, by observing the wonders of creation, could cloath the Deity with wisdom and power: but they could go no farther. The virtues of their heroes afforded them the highest ideas of perfection: and with these they arrayed their gods; mixing also with their virtues, such vices, as are found in the characters of the best of men.

For just notions of the Deity, we must have recourse then to revelation alone. Revelation removes all these absurdities. It dispels the clouds of ignorance; and unveils the divine majesty, as far as it can be the object of human contemplation. The lax notions of libertinism, on one hand, which make the deity an inobservant governor; and the gloomy ideas of superstition, on the other, which suppose him to be a dark, malignant being, are  
equally



equally exposed. Here we are informed of the omniscience, and omnipresence of God. Here we learn, that his wisdom and power are equalled by his goodness; and that his mercy is over all his works. In short, we learn from revelation, that we are in the hands of a being, whose knowledge we cannot evade, and whose power we cannot resist; who is merciful and good to all his creatures; and will be ever ready to assist, and reward those, who endeavour to conform themselves to his will: but whose justice, at the same time, accompanying his mercy, will punish the bold, and careless sinner in proportion to his guilt.

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## LECTURE IV.

Belief in Jesus Christ—that such a person lived, and was the author of a new religion, proved from Suetonius, Tacitus, and Pliny—that this person was the Messiah, proved from miracles and prophecies.

# LECTURE IV

Before we begin our study of the history of the Church, it is well to remember that the Church is a living organism, and that its history is the history of its growth and development. It is not a static institution, but a dynamic one, which has adapted itself to the changing needs of the world.

The Church has always been a source of comfort and strength to its members, and it has played a vital role in the civilization of the world. It has been a beacon of light in the darkest of times, and it has been a source of inspiration and courage to its followers.

In the study of the history of the Church, we shall find that it has been a constant struggle between the forces of tradition and the forces of progress. It has been a struggle between the old and the new, between the past and the future. But it has always been a struggle that has led to the growth and development of the Church.

It is our hope that this study will give us a better understanding of the Church and its role in the world. It will help us to see the Church in its true light, as a living organism that is constantly growing and developing. It will help us to see the Church as a source of strength and inspiration, and as a beacon of light in the darkest of times.



**A**FTER professing our belief in God, the creed proceeds with a profession of our belief “in Jesus Christ, his son, our Lord.”

A person celebrated as Jesus Christ was, we may suppose, would naturally find a place in the profane history of his times. It may not be amiss therefore, to introduce the evidence we are about to collect, with the testimony of some of the more eminent of the heathen writers, who have mentioned him. They will at least inform us, that such a person lived at the time we assert; and that he was the author of a new religion.—I shall quote only Suetonius, Tacitus, and Pliny.

Suetonius \* tells us, that “the emperor Claudius drove all the Jews from Rome, who, at the instigation of one Christ, were continually making disturbances.”

Tacitus †, speaking of the persecution of christians, tells us, “that the author of that name was Christ, who was put to death by Pontius Pilate, in the reign of Tiberius.”

\* *In vita Claud. Cæs.*

† *Lib. 15.*

Pliny's \* testimony is more large. It is contained in a letter, written to the emperor Trajan, desiring his instructions with regard to christians. He blames their obstinacy in refusing to sacrifice to the Roman deities—but from their own confession can draw nothing, but that they assemble, on a certain day, before sun rise,—that they pay divine honours to Christ as a God,—that they bind themselves by a sacrament not to steal, nor to commit adultery, nor to deceive—and that, after the performance of these rites, they join in one common meal. Nay he examined, he says, two of them by torture: yet still he finds nothing obnoxious in their behaviour, except their absurd superstitions. He thinks, however, the matter should be inquired into: for christianity had brought religion into great disuse. The markets were crouded with victims; and scarce a purchaser came near them.

These writers afford us sufficient testimony, that Jesus Christ lived, at the time we assert; and that he was the author of a new religion. They had opportunities of being well in-

\* *Lib. 10.*

formed;

formed; could have no interest in falsifying; were no converts to the new sect; but talk of Christ, only as they would of any singular person, whom they had occasion to mention. Their testimony therefore is beyond cavil.

Let us now proceed a step farther, and look into the scripture evidence of Christ, which proves not only his existence; but that he is our Lord, or the Messiah—not only that he was the author of a new religion; but that this religion is true.

Upon examining the grand scripture evidence on this head, we find the greatest stress laid upon miracles and prophecies; both of which are direct appeals to God, by a claim to supernatural power\*. And though both these modes of evidence are calculated as well for us, who live in remoter times, as for those,

\* *The heathen had the same idea of a miracle, and ascribed every thing he saw, which was contrary to the common order of nature, to some miraculous power. Thunder issuing from a stormy sky, was in the usual course of things: but when*

————— *de parte serena*

*Intonuit* —————

*it was beyond nature; and immediately became a miracle.*

who

who lived in the earliest; yet the evidence from miracles seems more particularly addressed to them; as that from prophecy is to us. They were the eye-witnesses of the miracles of the gospel, of which we have only the evidence at second hand. Whereas prophecy is a mode of evidence, which increases through every age. The early christians had it in part; but to us this amazing web is still more unfolded; and more of its wonderful texture displayed.—Let us examine each in its order.

Among the eye-witnesses of the gospel miracles, were many learned men, as well as unlearned. The former had opportunity and abilities to examine the works before them; to trace out fraud, if any such were latent; and did unquestionably receive them with all that circumspection which was due to such wonderful exhibitions, before they embraced the christian faith: while the most ignorant spectator was a competent judge of matter of fact; and many of our Saviour's miracles were such, as, from the nature of the facts themselves, must stand clear from all imputation of fraud.

It



It had a strange sound to the prejudices of mankind, that a crucified malefactor was the Saviour of the world; and we cannot suppose, that any man, much less that a multitude of men, would embrace such a belief without clear conviction: especially as no worldly advantage lay on the side of this belief; and the convert even renounced the world, and embraced a life of persecution.—Let us consider the single miracle of Christ's resurrection. Jesus had frequently mentioned it before his death; and the thing was so far in general credited, that the sepulchre was sealed, and an armed guard appointed to watch it. We may well suppose therefore, that his favourers would naturally, upon this occasion, reason thus: “Jesus hath now put his pretensions  
 “upon a fair issue. He hath told us, he will  
 “arise from the dead on the third day:—here  
 “then let us suspend our judgment; and  
 “wait the result. Three days will deter-  
 “mine, whether he be an impostor, or, the  
 “real Messiah.”—It is very natural to suppose, that the favourers of Jesus would reason, after his death, in a manner like this: and it is beyond credibility, that any of them would  
 have

have continued his disciples, had they found him falsifying in this point. But we know they did continue his disciples after this. We know also, that many proselytes, convinced by this very event, embraced the christian religion.—We have all the reason in the world therefore to believe, that they were fully satisfied. His miracles were to them a sufficient proof of his pretensions. All candid men would have acquiesced, as they did; and in their belief we have a very strong foundation for our own.

Again, with regard to prophecy, we observe, that the writers of the old testament seem, in various parts, to characterize some extraordinary person, who was in process of time to make his appearance in the world. The marks are peculiar, and can neither be mistaken nor misapplied. “ He was to be  
 “ born of a virgin—he was to turn the hearts  
 “ of the disobedient to the wisdom of the  
 “ just—though dignified with the charac-  
 “ ters of a prince, he was to be a man of  
 “ sorrows, and acquainted with grief—though  
 “ described to be without sin, he was to be  
 “ numbered with transgressors—his hands  
 “ and his feet were to be pierced—he was to  
 “ be

“ be made an offering for sin—and was never  
 “ to see corruption.”—These prophecies were  
 published many hundred years before the birth  
 of Christ; and had been all along in the hands,  
 not only of the Jews, but of all men of letters.  
 The old testament had been early translated  
 into the Greek language; and received into the  
 politest libraries of those times.

With these ideas, let us open the new testa-  
 ment, and it is obvious, that no picture can be  
 more like its original, than these prophecies of  
 Christ in one testament, are to his history in  
 the other. Here we see that extraordinary vir-  
 gin-birth unravelled.—Here we see a life spent  
 in turning the hearts of the disobedient to the  
 wisdom of the just.—Here we find the prince  
 of his people, a man of sorrows, and ac-  
 quainted with grief.—Here we see the Lord  
 of righteousness numbered with transgressors—  
 we see his hands and his feet pierced—we see  
 him made an offering for sin—and we see rea-  
 lized that extraordinary idea of death without  
 corruption.

It were an easy matter to carry this compa-  
 rison through a more minute detail of circum-  
 stances: but I mean only to trace the out-  
 lines

lines of this great resemblance. To compleat the picture would be a copious work.

Besides these predictions, which related immediately to the life and death of Christ; there were many others, which deserve notice. Among these, the two great leading prophecies, were those of the calling of the Gentiles, and of the dispersion of the Jews.

The calling of the Gentiles was one of the earliest prophecies of the old testament. The Jews were distinguished in appearance, as the favourite people of God; and they were sufficiently elated upon that distinction. But if they had attended closely to their prophets, they might have discovered, that all the prophecies, which described the happy state of the church, had evidently a more distant prospect, than to them. Those early promises, in particular, which were repeated to the patriarchs, were not merely confined to their posterity; but included "all the nations of the earth\*."—And when the later prophets, as the great event approached, spoke a plainer, and a more intelligible language, the

\* See Gen, 12, lili. 18, xviii. 22, xviii. 26, iv.



whole nation might have understood, as Si-  
meon, and some of the wisest, and most intel-  
ligible of them did understand, that “ a light  
“ was sprung up to lighten the Gentiles.”

The prophecy of the dispersion of the jewish  
nation is also very ancient, being attributed  
by Moses to the patriarch Jacob. “ The  
“ sceptre shall not depart from Judah, until  
“ Shiloh come.” Whatever may be the  
precise meaning of the word sceptre in the  
original; and though it may not perhaps  
properly signify that idea of regal power,  
which it conveys to our ears; yet it certainly  
means some badge of authority, that implies  
a formed and settled government. And as to  
the word Shiloh, all commentators, jewish as  
well as christian, explain it to mean the Mes-  
siah.—The sense therefore of the prophecy  
is plainly this—that the Jews should continue  
in the form of a society, till the time of the  
Messiah. Accordingly we find, that, soon  
after Christ’s death, the sceptre did depart  
from Judah: the Jews lost all form of a politi-  
cal society; and are a singular instance of a  
people, scattered over the whole earth, pre-  
served

served to this day separate from all other people, and yet without a settlement any where.

Our Saviour's prophecy of the growth of his church, is likewise among the more remarkable predictions. He told his disciples, that "his religion was like a grain of mustard seed, which was the least of all seeds; but when it grew up, it should become a great tree, and the fowls of the air should lodge in the branches of it." He told them also, that "the gates of hell should never prevail against it."

The jewish religion was continually enforced by the idea of a jealous God, watching over it, and threatening judgments from heaven upon every transgression. The divine authority was stamped openly upon it. The people trembled, and worshipped.

When the impostor Mahomet set up for a reformer, he could not indeed enforce his religion by divine judgments; but he did it by temporal. He drew his sword, and held it to the breasts of his opposers; while he promised to the obedient a full gratification of of their passions.

But

But in the christian religion, nothing of this kind appeared. No temporal judgments threatened on one hand : no sensual indulgences allured on the other. A few desponding ignorant mechanics, the disciples of a person crucified as a common malefactor, were all the parade, with which this religion was ushered into the world ; and all the human assistance, which it had to boast.—And yet this religion, which opposed the strongest prejudices, and was opposed by the greatest princes, made its way in a few years, from a remote corner, through the whole Roman empire.—Thus was our Saviour's prophecy, in opposition to all human calculation, exactly fulfilled. The least of all seeds became a spreading tree ; and a church was established, which could not be destroyed by all the powers of hell.

But although the church of Christ could not be destroyed, it was corrupted ; and in a course of years fell from its genuine purity. This corrupt state of it—the delusions of popery—the efforts of reformation, and various other circumstances relating to it, are not un-

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reasonably supposed to be held forth, in the prophetic parts of the new testament.

But I forbear to dwell upon such prophecies, as are not obvious enough to carry general conviction; though many of them have been well explained by those\*, who are versed in the histories, to which they allude. Future times will, in all probability, reflect a stronger light upon them. Some of the great prophecies, which we have just considered, shone but with a feeble ray, during the times they were fulfilling, though they now strike us in so forcible a manner.

\* See Bp. Newton's dissertations; and Bp. Hurd's sermons on prophecy.



## LECTURE V.

Objections to miracles, and prophecies—marks of distinction between true and false miracles —between true and false prophecies.—The truth of religion founded upon the combined force of its whole evidence.



**A** GAINST the evidence arising from miracles, and prophecy, we are well aware of what the deist objects—that false miracles have been wrought by impostors; and fallacious prophecies given out by oracles—and that we cannot suppose the miracles, and prophecies of the bible to be better founded; or, in any degree, a more respectable criterion of truth.

We answer, that a very palpable distinction may be established.

First, the true miracle must fall under the examination of men's natural senses\*. When a priest displays a phial full of blood, which sometimes congeals, and sometimes liquifies, he has no right to our credit, unless he submit his phial to our examination. But when a man is raised from the dead; when a man is cured of blindness at a word's speaking; when two or three thousand people are fed by a pittance, there can be no deception: our senses, which are the only competent judges, have the means of judging.

\* See *Lesley's short method with deists*.

Secondly, the true miracle must be performed before credible witnesses. A business huddled up in a cloister, before a few interested monks, is not properly attested. But when an action is performed before the public eye, as most of the miracles of Christ were; or before witnesses, who have totally exculpated themselves of having any end, but that of truth, we have all the attestation we could wish.

Thirdly, the true miracle must have an elevated end in view. When we hear of a miracle abetting the interest of some little corrupt society, we cannot suppose the Almighty concerned in such an event. But the miracles of the gospel had other ends. They were employed to usher in an event, on which depended the salvation of mankind.

Fourthly, the true miracle must be handed down by authentic records, which take their rise at the time, when the miracle was performed\*. A vague tradition, or an undated, legendary tale, is no record. But the christian may with great propriety appeal to the scriptures, which he first proves were written at

\* See Lesley's *short method with deists*.



the time, when the events they relate, were performed.

Lastly, the torture of question tends greatly to authenticate the real miracle. The false one abhors inquiry. At the reformation detections were abundant. But after the most rigorous question, the gospel-miracles have maintained their credit through the space of seventeen hundred years

Having thus pointed out a few topics of distinction between true, and false miracles; it is as easy to point them out between true, and false prophecies.—The true prophecy, like the true miracle, has a more elevated end, and a more enlarged plan.

When we meet with a prophecy, the avowed end of which is to satisfy some trivial curiosity, or abet the designs of some ambitious leader, suspicion must needs take the alarm. This was evidently the character of the ancient oracles. However directed, whether by bad men, or bad spirits, they certainly spoke as they were paid, or intimidated. But in the prophecies of the bible we find a different style. Marked neither by interested views, nor by servile compliances, they advance uniformly

the same great end, which its miracles also proposed, the salvation of a ruined world.

Secondly, neither men, nor evil spirits ever gave an instance of the power of foretelling future events upon any enlarged plan. What were the decisions of oracles, but quibbling answers to some present question? Or opinions, to which human foresight was equal? Or at best the predictions of events, confined to some short span of time? When did any oracle foretel an event a thousand years before its completion? Or from which of them do we find a series of prophecy issuing through different ages, the whole concurring in one point, and yet in every particular exactly fulfilled?

Thus much in answer to the particular objections of the deist; but let me farther add, (as a caution against his arts), that we mean not to ground the truth of our religion upon detached parts, even upon miracles, and prophecies considered alone: but upon the whole scheme, and combined force of its evidence. In this way we judge of every thing else; and when we judge otherwise, we shall probably make a false estimate. Who would judge of a building from a column; or of a country from

a field? And yet in this partial view, the deist chiefly forms his cavils; and imagines he has gained a complete victory, when he tells us, that the miracles of the gospel are marked with the same characters, as the sorceries of evil spirits; and its prophecies are just as incredible as the divinations of oracles. We should recommend it to him therefore to enlarge his views; and examine the whole chain of evidence from the earliest accounts of time.

Let him first consider that remarkable promise of "bruising the serpent's head," which was given as soon as the transgression was committed. This was the first dawn of hope, which God vouchsafed to a guilty world: and though the figurative language, under which it is couched, was dubious and obscure; yet its meaning, though not fully understood, was easily conceived to contain some promise of victory over the adversary of mankind.

In a few ages after, its meaning was more opened; and the hopes of an infant-world, thus raised, were increased by a very remarkable promise, that in the issue of one of the patriarchs, "all the nations of the earth should be blessed." And what is still more remarkable,  
the

the promise was repeated three several times. —Here, not only a victory over an enemy was announced; but a state of happiness in some shape was declared.

Let him next trace these hopes still increasing, and opening more and more through every age. In the patriarchal history, the sacrifice of Isaac, the deliverance from Egypt, the promised land, and a variety of other incidents, have much more dignity, and meaning, when we consider them, not barely as history; but as typical events leading the mind forward in the contemplation of some great scheme.

Still more will he find these hopes excited by the types and ceremonies of the Jewish law, which seem to have had little meaning, if they had no concealed one; and by the sacrifices, which prevailed over the greatest part of the known world—all pointing strongly at a particular mode of salvation, through a mediator, an atonement, and an offering for sin.

When he has examined these silent notices, let him next survey the prophetic writers of the old testament. Here he will find the same ideas—only expressed in bolder language, and a  
Saviour



Saviour now pointed out, as we have \* just seen, by very peculiar characteristics.

He will find too among the heathen philosophers, historians, and poets † many very remarkable

\* See page 44.

† Plato, who lived above 400 years before Christ, is one of the earliest writers, in whom we have any traits of this kind. He tells us, that "it is necessary a divine instructor should teach us to pray: (*Alcibiades* 2d) "that as every creature is governed by a nature superior to its own, as beasts are by men; so it is necessary, that this divine instructor, who teaches man, what he could not know himself, must be of a nature superior to man, that is divine: (*De leg.* l. 4)—"that he must come recommended to us by none of the advantages of this world, but by virtue alone: that the wickedness of men would not bear his instructions, and reproof; and that within three or four years after he began to preach, he should be persecuted, imprisoned, scourged, and put to death." (*De repub.* 2.) One would imagine Plato had made a transcript from the 53d chapter of Isaiah. It is remarkable, that he uses the word *ἀνταρδιόθυτοι*, which may signify either to be crucified; or to be cut in pieces like a sacrifice.

Suetonius, in the life of Vespasian, has this remarkable expression: "Percrebuerat, orientis toto, vetus, & constans opinio, esse in fatis, ut eo tempore Judæa profecti rerum potirentur."—Tacitus (*lib.* 5.) speaks almost the same language. "Pluribus persuasio inerat, antiquis sacerdotum literis contineri, ipso tempore fore ut valesceret oriens, pro-fectiq. Judæa rerum potirentur."—Suetonius also, in the life of Augustus (*cap.* 94.), alluding to the same opinion, 1st tells us that a child in such a year should be brought forth, and should be a king of the Romans. Upon which, says he, "Senatum exterritum censuisse, ne quis  
" illo

markable traits, however they came by them, of the expectation of some great instructor.

Thus

*"illo anno genitus educaretur; eos autem, qui gravidas uxores haberent, (quo ad se quisq. spem traheret) curasse, ut senatus consultum ad avarium deferretur."*—It was an opinion also of this kind that spirited up Lentulus to aid Catiline's conspiracy. The Sibylline oracles spoke of a king about to rise at that time; which different people interpreted in different ways: and Lentulus, as his interests led, supposed the oracle had respect to the Cornelian family. This his enemies brought as a crime against him, taxing him with certain vaunting speeches, *"quos ille habere solitus erat, ex libris sybillinis, regnum Roma tribus Corneliis portendi."* (Sal. Rell. Cat.)—All these notions Tully, as a philosopher, ridicules. *"Quidvis potius ex illis libris quam regem proferant; quem Romæ post hæc nec Dii, nec homines esse patientur."*—Among the more remarkable passages in antiquity, on this subject, is the Pollio of Virgil. I shall not enter into any inquiry about the Cumæan Sibyl: whether Virgil got the substance of these verses from some of her remains? Nor, if he did, how she came by them? It is enough for my purpose, that a strong intimation of an extraordinary personage to be born at this time, is found in the works of a beaten poet. Some of the strongest passages, I shall quote.

*"Magnus ab integro sæclorum nascitur ordo.  
 "Jam redit et virgo; redeunt Saturnia regna:  
 "Jam nova progenies cælo demittitur alto,  
 "Tu modo nascenti puero, quo ferrea primum  
 "Definet; ac toto surget gens aurea mundo,  
 "Castia fave Lucina.—  
 "Te duce, si qua manent sceleris vestigia nostri  
 "Irrita perpetua solvent formidine terras.*

*"Ille*

Thus prepared, let him take up the new testament; and compare all these notices, and prophecies with the history of Christ. Has he the candour to acknowledge any light reflected from one to the other? Can he account for all these remarkable resemblances (remarkable they certainly are), in any more consistent

“ Ille Deum vitam accipiet,——

“ Peccatumq. reget patriis virtutibus orbem.

“ Occidet et serpens.”——

*The following lines,*

“ ——— Flavescit campus arista,

“ Incultisq. rubens pendebit sentibus uva.

“ — Nec magnos metuent armenta leones,”

*seem to be a transcript from the prophet Isaiah's ideas, expressing the tranquillity and happiness, which should take possession of all nature, upon the coming of the Messiah. “ Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle tree.—The wolf shall dwell with the lamb; the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the young lion, and the fattling together.”*

*I shall conclude these passages from the ancient writers of Greece and Rome, with one, which is said to be exactly translated from Confucius; though for myself, I rather doubt its authenticity. “ How sublime are the ways of the Holy One! What a noble course is opening before us! What laws, rites, and sacred solemnities! But how shall men ob-serve them if HE does not set the example? HIS COMING alone can prepare us for them! The paths of virtue will never be frequented, till the HOLY ONE consecrate them by his own footsteps.”*

*See Memoirs concerning the history, &c. of the Chinese, by the missionaries of Pekin. vol. 1. Paris 1776.*

way;

way; or will he venture to allow, that a chain of evidence descends thus far unbroken?

If he hath weighed all this with serious attention, it will not perhaps now give him so much offence to examine the miracles of the gospel. As the united parts of a regular plan they may probably appear to him now in a more advantageous light: and though he may not be inclined to allow them that consequence for which we contend; yet he must certainly allow they make another link in this chain of evidence; to which they give, and from which they receive, additional strength.

He may also consider that from the writers of the new testament issued a new series of prophecies, which after-ages have seen as exactly fulfilled, as those of the old.

Having thus examined the external evidence of the christian religion, let him consider further, its strong \* internal evidence, arising from many sources, but particularly from

\* Dr. Maclain, and other able writers, have shewn, in their remarks, upon a late very ingenious, and in many respects, very valuable performance, that to rest the cause of christianity merely upon its internal evidence, is a very injurious mode of proof.



the purity of its doctrine. Let him candidly ask himself, if he does not think the christian religion bears all those marks of holiness and purity, which he might expect from a revelation of God's will? What religion was so calculated to promote the happiness of mankind, as the christian? All solicitude about the things of this world, all ambitious desires, every little sinister interest, and with these every ground of contention, and every source of unhappiness, is removed; while every motive to benevolence is inculcated. In a word, to make themselves as happy as this world can make them, men need only become christians.

Nor let him end his enquiries here: let him next consider, that this religion was sealed by the blood of innumerable martyrs. For although martyrdom, in general, is rather an evidence of the sincerity of the sufferer, than of the truth of the opinion, yet the case of the early martyrs was different. They suffered, not in support of opinions, but in attestation either of matter of fact; or of original information, in which they could not be deceived.

Let

Let his views open still farther, and discover to him this religion (agreeable to the predictions of its author), taking possession of great part of the known world, against all the opposition of its enemies, and without any worldly assistance: let him see the heathen deities in all places giving ground before it—their rites and ceremonies abolished—and the use of sacrifice every where ceasing upon the completion of its end.—Let him have recourse for these things to his prophane history.

There also let him be informed of the total dispersion of the jewish nation, agreeable to the predictions he had read in his bible—a nation, which having been a mere vehicle to introduce the christian religion, immediately disperses, and loses all form of a political society, when that religion becomes established.

Let him seriously and attentively examine all this chain of evidence (to which indeed many other links might be added), and he must acknowledge, that it is not a pert cavil against some particular miracle; a quaint objection to some obscure text; or an illiberal jest at the mysteries of religion, that can break it. It hangs

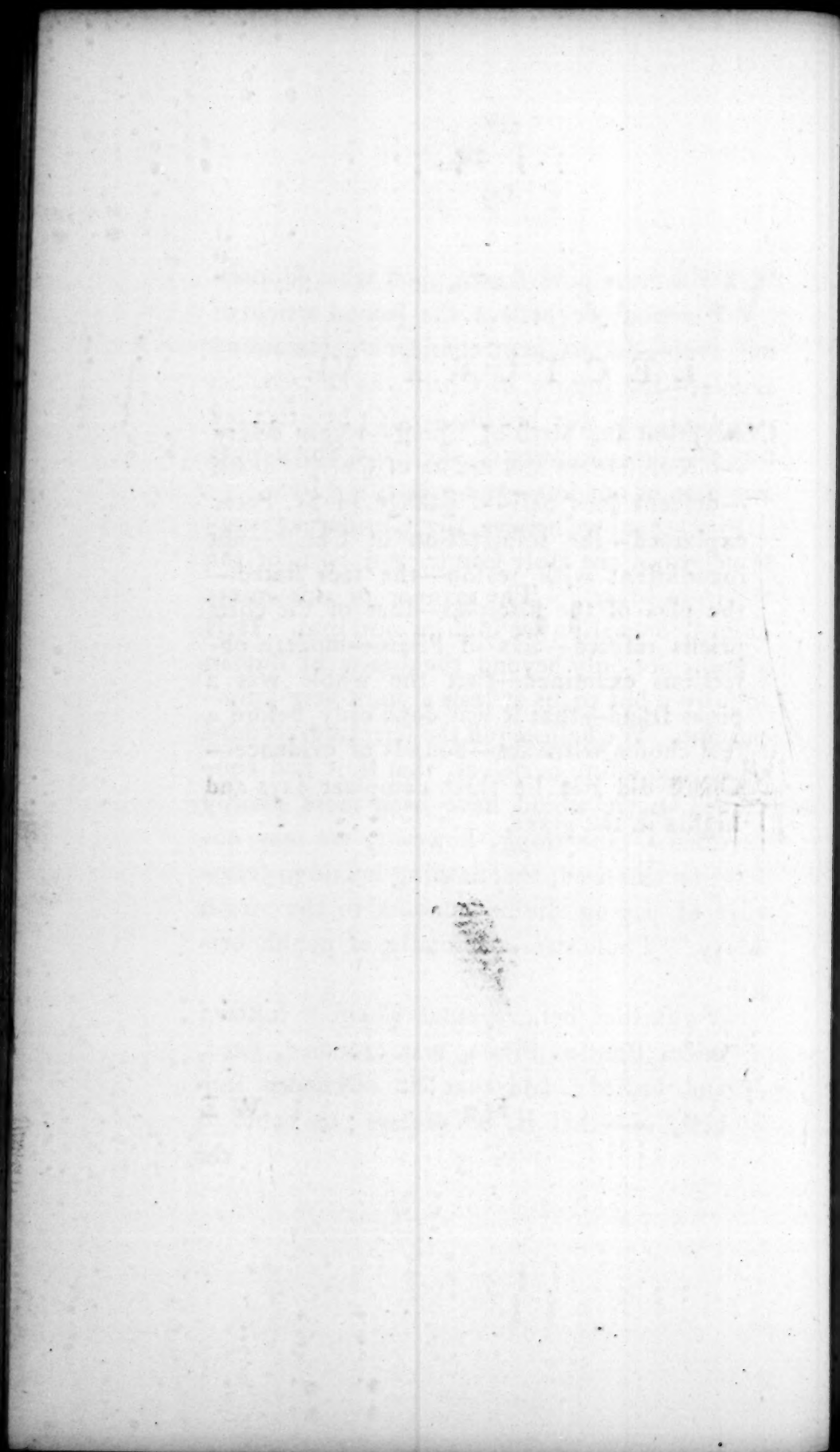
hangs so strong, so firm, and so connected, from the very beginning of time to this present moment, that he who examines it thoroughly, link by link, and the connection of the whole; cannot but acquiesce in this accumulation of evidence, and admire the wonderful contrivance, and wisdom, that have been employed, in dispelling every objection; and in grounding the christian religion upon so firm a basis.

large to strong, to fine, and to scattered,  
from the very beginning of time to the present  
moment, that he was anxious to thoroughly  
know his land, and the position of the whole;  
though not acquainted with the location of  
the land, and having no accurate knowledge  
of the land, and without the land being  
in a position to be sold, and in a  
position to be sold upon a plan.



## LECTURE VI.

Conception and birth of Christ—virgin Mary—circumstances and reality of Christ's death—descent into hell—a passage in St. Peter explained—the resurrection of Christ—not inconsistent with reason—the fact stated—the plea of the disciples—that of the chief priests refuted—acts of Pilate—modern objections examined—that the whole was a pious fraud—that it was done only before a few chosen witnesses—bounds of evidence—Christ did not lie three compleat days and nights in the grave.



**W**E have now shewn upon what foundation we believe the second article of our creed, let us next consider the remaining articles—the history of Christ, as delivered in scripture, and the benefits which he procured for us—the assistance of the Holy Spirit—the remission of our sins—and everlasting life.

First, then, we believe, that Christ was “conceived of the Holy Ghost, and born of the virgin Mary.” The manner of this miraculous conception we inquire not into. It is a point not only beyond the limits of human inquiry; but to us at least a point very unimportant. We believe just the scripture-account of it, and assure ourselves, that if it had concerned us, it would have been more plainly revealed.—One thing, however, we may observe on this head, that nothing is said in scripture of paying divine honours to the virgin Mary. Those rites are totally of popish origin.

We farther believe, that Christ “suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; and that he descended into hell,”—that is, we declare our belief of

the scripture-account of the circumstances and the reality of Christ's death.

To make an action clear, it is necessary, first, to establish its date. This is usually done by ranging it under the magistrate who then presided, the time of whose government is always registered in some public record.—Thus we believe that Christ's death happened when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea. We believe also, with regard to the manner of his death, that he was crucified; that he died as really as any mortal ever did; and that he was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea\*.

The “descent into hell” is undoubtedly a more obscure expression than might be wished in a creed, and was not indeed added till many ages after the creed was first composed†. But as creeds are human compositions, we believe this, and every other difficulty, only as consistent with scripture. Now the sense which seems most agreeable to scripture, is, that his

\* *Isaiab foretold he should “make his grave with the rich.” And St. Matthew tells us, that οψιας γενομενης, ηλθεν ανδρων πλουσων.* Matt. xvii. 57. *Isaiab liii. 9.*

† See Bingham's antiquities, vol. iii. c. 3.



soul remained till his resurrection in that place (whatever that place is) where the spirits of the blessed rest: and the expression seems to have been added, only that we may the more strongly express our belief of the reality of his death. This we do, when we express our belief of the separation of his soul and body. "He was buried,"—and "descended into hell." The first expression relates to his body, which was laid in the grave; the second to his soul, which passed into the place of departed spirits.

We farther believe, that "on the third day" he rose again from the dead." The resurrection of Christ from the dead is a point of the utmost importance to christians. On the certainty of Christ's resurrection depend all hopes of our own. On this article; therefore, we shall be more large.

And, in the first place, what is there in it that need shock our reason? It was a wonderful event; but is not nature full of wonderful events? When we seriously weigh the matter, is it less strange, that a grain of corn thrown into the ground should die, and rise again with new vegetation, than that a human body, in

the same circumstances, should assume new life? The commonness of the former makes it familiar to us, but not in any degree less unaccountable. Are we at all more acquainted with the manner in which grain germinates, than with the manner in which a body is raised from the dead? And is it not obviously striking, that the same power which can effect the one, may effect the other also?—But analogy, though it tend to convince, is no proof. Let us proceed then to matter of fact.

That the body was dead, and safely lodged in the tomb, and afterwards conveyed out of it, was agreed on, both by those who opposed, and by those who favoured the resurrection. In the circumstances of the latter fact, they differ widely.

The disciples tell their story—a very plain and simple one—that, scarce expecting the event, notwithstanding their master had himself foretold it, they were surprised with an account, that the body was gone—that they found afterwards, to their great astonishment, that their master was again alive—that they had been several times with him; and appealed for  
the

the truth of what they said to great numbers, who, as well as themselves, had seen him after his resurrection.

The chief priests, on the other side, declared the whole to be a forgery ; asserting, that the plain matter of fact was, the disciples came by night, and stole the body away, while the soldiers slept.

Such a tale, unsupported by evidence, would be listened to in no court of justice. It has not even the air of probability. Can it be supposed, that the disciples, who had fled with terror, when they might have rescued their master's life ; would venture, in the face of an armed guard, to carry off his dead body ?—Or is it more probable, that they found the whole guard asleep ; when we know, that the vigilance of centinels is secured by the strictest discipline ?—Besides, what advantage could arise from such an attempt ? If they miscarried, it was certain ruin, both to them and their cause. If they succeeded, it is difficult to say what use they could make of their success. Unless they could have produced their dead body alive, the second error would be worse than the first. Their master's prophecy of his own resurrection  
was

was an unhappy circumstance ; yet still it was wrapped in a veil of obscurity. But if his disciples endeavoured to prove its completion, it was their business to look well to the event. A detection would be such a comment upon their master's text, as would never be forgotten.—When a cause depends on falsehood, every body knows, the less it is moved the better.

This was the case of the other side. Obscurity there was wanted. If the chief priests had any proof, why did they not produce it ? Why were not the disciples taken up, and examined upon the fact ? They never absconded, Why were they not judicially tried ? Why was not the trial made public ? And why were not authentic memorials of the fraud handed down to posterity ; as authentic memorials were of the fact, recorded at the very time, and place, where it happened ? Christianity never wanted enemies to propagate its disparagement.—But nothing of this kind was done. No proof was attempted—except indeed the testimony of men asleep. The disciples were never questioned upon the fact ; and the chief priests rested  
satisfied



satisfied with spreading an inconsistent rumour among the people, impressed merely by their own authority.

Whatever records of heathen origin remain, evince the truth of the resurrection. One is very remarkable. Pontius Pilate sent the emperor Tiberius a relation of the death and resurrection of Christ; which were recorded at Rome, as usual, among other provincial matters. This intelligence made so great an impression, it seems, upon the emperor, that he referred it to the senate, whether Jesus Christ of Judea should not be taken into the number of the Roman gods?—The credit of this fact is founded on the testimony of Justin Martyr, and Tertullian, two learned heathens, in the age succeeding Christ, who became christians from this very evidence, among others, in favour of christianity. In their apologies \*, still extant, one of which was made to the senate of Rome, the other to a Roman governor, they both appeal to these records of Pontius Pilate, as then generally known; which we cannot conceive

\* *Just. Mart. Apol. ad Anton. P.*—*Tertull. Apol. cap. 15.*

such able apologists would have done, if no such records had ever existed\*.

Having seen what was of old objected to the resurrection of Christ, it may be proper also to see the objections of modern disbelievers.

And, first, we have the stale objection, that nothing is more common among the propagators of every new religion, than to delude their ignorant proselytes with idle stories. What a variety of inconsistent tales did the votaries of heathenism believe? What absurdities are adopted into the Mahometan creed? To what strange facts do the vulgar papists give credit? And can we suppose better of the resurrection of Christ, than that it was one of those pious frauds, intended merely to impose on the people, and advance the credit of the new sect?

This is just as easily said, as that his disciples stole him away, while the guard slept. Both

\* *That the acts of Pilate, and his letter to Tiberius, as we now have them, are spurious, is allowed by all learned men. I contend only, that such acts did formerly exist. If the reader wishes to see the evidence in favour of them collected in one point of view, I refer him to the article of Christ's suffering under Pontius Pilate, in Bp. Pearson's exposition of the creed; and to Dr. Lardner's testimonies, vol. I. p. 310.*

are assertions without proof. But this objection, I trust, we have already answered, when we endeavoured to establish certain topics of distinction, between true and false miracles\*.

Others have objected Christ's partial discovery of himself, after his resurrection. If he had boldly shewn himself to the chief priests; or publicly to all the people; we might have had a more rational foundation for our belief. But as he had only for his witnesses, upon this occasion, a few of his chosen companions, the thing has certainly a more secret appearance than might be wished.

This insinuation is founded upon a passage in the Acts of the Apostles, in which it is said, that "God shewed him openly, not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God." The question is, what is meant by witnesses chosen before of God? Certainly nothing more than persons expressly, and by particular designation, intended to be the witnesses of this event. Others might see him, if they pleased; but these were not the people, to whom God shewed him openly: this particular designation

\* See page 53.

was confined to the "chosen witnesses."—And is there any thing more in this, than we see daily in all legal proceedings? Does not every body wish to have the fact, about which he is concerned, authenticated by indubitable records; or by living testimony, if it can be had? Do we not procure the hands of witnesses, appointed to this purpose, in all our deeds and writings?—Let us not, however, answer the objection by an arbitrary explanation of the text: but let us compare this explanation with the matter of fact.

On the morning of the resurrection, the apostles, who ran to the sepulchre to make themselves acquainted with what they had heard, received a message from their master, injoining them, to meet him in Galilee. It does not appear, that this message was conveyed with any secrecy: it is rather probable it was not; and that the disciples told it to as many as they met. The women, it is expressly said, "told it to the eleven, and "all the rest." Who the rest were, does not appear: but it is plain from the sequel, that the thing was generally known; and that as many as chose either to satisfy their faith, or gratify



gratify their curiosity, repaired for that purpose to Galilee. And thus we find St. Peter making a distinction between the voluntary and the chosen witness—between those “who had  
“ accompanied with the apostles all the time,  
“ that the Lord Jesus went in and out among  
“ them, from his baptism till his ascension,”  
and those who “were ordained to be the witnesses of his resurrection\*.”

St. Paul goes farther, and in express words tells us, that Christ was seen †, “after his resurrection, of above five hundred brethren at  
“ once :” and it is probable, from the expression, “at once,” that he was seen, at different times, by many more.

If then Christ thus appeared in Galilee to as many as chose to see him; or even if he appeared only to five hundred people, of whom St. Paul tells us, the greatest part were still alive, when he wrote his epistle, there can surely be no reasonable cause of offence at his appearing, besides these, to a few of his chosen companions, who attended by express appointment, as persons designed to record the event.

\* *Acts* i. 21.

† *I Cor.* xv.

In fact, if the same method be pursued in this inquiry, which is usual in all others, the evidence of these chosen companions is all that is necessary. Here are twelve men produced (in general three or four men are thought sufficient) on whose evidence the fact depends. Are they competent witnesses? Have they those marks about them, which characterise men of integrity? Can they be challenged on any ground of rational exception? If not, their evidence is as strictly legal, as full, and as satisfactory, as any reasonable man can require.—But in this great cause, we see the evidence is carried still farther. Here are five hundred persons waiting without, ready to add their testimony, if any one should require it, to what has already been more than legally proved. So that the argument even addresses itself to that absurd distinction, which we often find in the cavils of infidelity, between *rem certam* and *rem certissimam*.

On the whole, then, we may affirm boldly, that this great event of the resurrection of Christ is founded upon evidence equal to the importance of it. If we expect still more, our answer is upon record: “If ye believe not  
“Moses.

"Moses and the prophets," God's ordinary means of salvation, "neither will ye be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.— There must be bounds in all human evidence; and he who will believe nothing, unless he have every possible mode of proof, must be an infidel in almost every transaction of life. With such persons there is no reasoning. They who are not satisfied, because Christ did not appear in open parade at Jerusalem; would farther have asked, if he had appeared in the manner they expected, why he did not appear to every nation upon earth? Or perhaps, why he did not shew himself to every individual?

To these objections may be added a scruple, taken from a passage of scripture, in which it is said that "Christ should lie three days, and three nights in the heart of the earth:" whereas, in fact, he only lay two nights, one whole day, and a part of two others.

But no figure in speech is more common than that of putting a part for the whole. In the Hebrew language perhaps this license is more admissible, than in any other. A day and a night compleat one whole day; and as our Sa-  
G
viour

viour lay in the ground a part of every one of these three portions of time, he might be said, by an easy liberty of speech, to have lain the whole.



## LECTURE VII.

Christ's ascension into heaven—last judgment  
—fruitless inquiries relative to it—scripture  
representation of this great event—belief in  
the Holy Ghost—its operations—scripture  
doctrine of the assistance we receive from it  
—heathen opinions on this point.

## LECTURE VII.

Chap. 1. The first part of the lecture is devoted to a consideration of the general principles of the subject. The second part is devoted to a consideration of the special principles of the subject. The third part is devoted to a consideration of the practical application of the principles of the subject. The fourth part is devoted to a consideration of the historical development of the subject. The fifth part is devoted to a consideration of the future of the subject.

**W**E believe farther, that Christ "ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God."

Christ's ascension into heaven rests on the same kind of proof, as his resurrection. Both of them are events, which the apostles were "ordained to witness." But though their testimony in this case, as well as in the resurrection, is certainly the most legal, and authentic proof; and fully sufficient for any reasonable man; yet this does not exclude the voluntary testimony of others. It is evident, that the apostles were not the sole eye-witnesses of this event: for when St. Peter called together the first assembly of the church to choose a successor to Judas Iscariot, he tells them, they must necessarily choose one, out of those men, who had been witnesses of all that Christ did from his baptism, "till his ascension;" and we find, there were in that meeting an hundred and twenty persons\*, thus qualified.

\* See Acts i, 25.

Be it however as it will, if this article should rest on a less formal proof, than the resurrection, it is of no great consequence: for if the resurrection be fully proved, nobody can well deny the ascension.

With regard to "the right hand of God," it is a scriptural expression used merely in conformity to our gross conceptions; and is intended only to imply an idea of pre-eminence, not any distinction of parts.

We believe farther, that "Christ shall come to judge the quick, and the dead."

This article contains the most serious truth, that ever was revealed to mankind. In part it was an article of the heathen creed. To unenlightened nature it seemed probable, that, as we had reason given us for a guide, we should hereafter be accountable for its abuse: and the poets, who were the prophets of early days, and durst deliver those truths under the veil of fable, which the philosopher kept more to himself, give us many traits of the popular belief on this subject\*. But

\* See particularly the 6th book of Virgil's *Æneid*,

the gospel alone threw a full light upon this awful truth.

In examining this great article, the curiosity of human nature, ever delighting to explore unbeaten regions, hath often been tempted, beyond its limits, into fruitless inquiries; scrutinizing the time of this event; and settling with vain precision, the circumstances of it. All curiosity of this kind is idle at least; if not presumptuous. When the Almighty hath thrown a veil over any part of his dispensation, it is the folly of man to endeavour to draw it aside.

Let us then leave all fruitless inquiries about this great event; and employ our thoughts chiefly upon such circumstances of it, as most concern us.—Let us animate our hopes with the soothing reflection, that we have our sentence, in a manner, in our own power,—that the same gracious gospel, which directs our lives, shall direct the judgment we receive,—that the same gracious person, shall be our judge, who died for our sins—and that his goodness, we are assured, will still operate



towards us; and make the kindest allowances for all our infirmities.

But lest our hopes should be too buoyant, let us consider, on the other hand, what an awful detail against us will then appear. The subject of that grand inquiry will be all our transgressions of known duty—all our omissions of knowing better—our secret intentions—our indulged evil-thoughts—the bad motives, which often accompany our most plausible actions—and, we are told, even our idle words.—“He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.”—Then shall it be known, whether we have answered the great ends of life?—Whether we have made this world subservient to a better?—Whether we have prepared ourselves for a state of happiness in heaven, by endeavouring to communicate happiness to our fellow-creatures upon earth? Whether we have restrained our appetites, and passions; and reduced them within the bounds of reason and religion? Or, whether we have given ourselves up to pleasure, gain, or ambition; and formed such attachments to this world, as fit us for nothing else; and leave us no  
hopes

hopes either of gaining, or of enjoying a better? It will be happy for us, if on all these heads of inquiry, we can answer without dismay.—Worldly distinctions, we know, will then be of no avail. The proudest of them will be then confounded. “Naked came we  
“ into the world; and naked must we return.” We can carry nothing beyond the grave, but our virtues, and our vices.

I shall conclude what hath been said on the last judgment with a collection of passages on this head from scripture; where only our ideas of it can be obtained. And though most of these passages are figurative; yet as figures are intended to illustrate realities, and are indeed the only illustrations of which this subject is capable, we may take it for granted, that these figurative expressions are intended to convey a just idea of the truth.—With a view to make the more impression upon you, I shall place these passages in a regular series; though collected from various parts.

“ The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with his holy angels—The trumpet  
“ shall sound; and all that are in the grave,  
“ shall

“ shall hear his voice, and come forth.—Then  
 “ shall he sit upon the throne of his glory;  
 “ and all nations shall be gathered before him  
 “ —the books shall be opened; and men  
 “ shall be judged according to their works.—  
 “ They who have sinned without law, shall  
 “ perish, (that is be judged) without law;  
 “ and they who have sinned in the law, shall  
 “ be judged by the law.—Unto whomsoever  
 “ much is given, of him shall be much re-  
 “ quired.—Then shall he say to them on his  
 “ right hand, Come, ye blessed, inherit the  
 “ kingdom prepared for you. And to them  
 “ on his left, Depart from me, ye cursed,  
 “ into everlasting fire prepared for the devil  
 “ and his angels.—Then shall the righteous  
 “ shine forth in the presence of their father;  
 “ while the wicked shall go into everlasting  
 “ punishment: there shall be wailing and  
 “ gnashing of teeth.—What manner of per-  
 “ sons ought we then to be in all holy conver-  
 “ sation, and godliness? looking for, and  
 “ hastening unto, the day of our Lord;  
 “ when the heavens, being on fire, shall be  
 “ dissolved, and the elements shall melt with  
 “ fervent

“ fervent heat.—Wherefore, beloved, seeing  
 “ that we look for such things, let us be dili-  
 “ gent, that we may be found of him in  
 “ peace, without spot, and blameless; that  
 “ each of us may receive that blessed sentence,  
 “ Well done, thou good and faithful servant:  
 “ thou hast been faithful over a little, enter  
 “ thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

We believe, farther, in “ the Holy  
 “ Ghost;” that is, we believe every thing  
 which the scriptures tells us of the Holy Spirit  
 of God —We inquire not into the nature of  
 its union with the Godhead. We take it for  
 granted, that the Father, the Son, and the  
 Holy Ghost, have some kind of union, and  
 some kind of distinction; because both this  
 union and this distinction are plainly pointed  
 out in scripture; but how they exist, we in-  
 quire not; concluding here, as in other points  
 of difficulty, that if a clearer information had  
 been necessary, it would have been afforded.

With regard to the operations of the Holy  
 Spirit of God (besides which, little more on  
 this head is revealed), we believe, that it di-  
 rected the apostles, and enabled them to propa-  
 gate



gate the gospel—and that it will assist all good men in the conscientious discharge of a pious life.

The scripture-doctrine, with regard to the assistance we receive from the Holy Spirit of God (which is the most essential part of this article), is briefly this.

Our best endeavours are insufficient. We are unprofitable servants, after all; and cannot please God, unless sanctified, and assisted by his Holy Spirit. Hence the life of a good man hath been sometimes called a standing miracle; something beyond the common course of nature. To attain any degree of goodness, we must be supernaturally assisted.

At the same time, we are assured of this assistance, if we strive to obtain it by fervent prayer, and a pious life. If we trust in ourselves, we shall fail. If we trust in God, without doing all we can ourselves, we shall fail likewise. And if we continue obstinate in our perverseness, we may at length totally incapacitate ourselves from being the temples of the Holy Ghost.

And indeed what is there in all this, which common life does not daily illustrate? Is any thing



thing more common, than for the intellect of one man to assist that of another? Is not the whole scheme of education an infusion of knowledge and virtue not our own? Is it not evident too, that nothing of this kind can be communicated without application on the part of the learner? Are not the efforts of the teacher in a manner necessarily proportioned to this application? If the learner becomes languid in his pursuits, are not the endeavours of the teacher of course discouraged? And will they not at length wholly fail, if it be found in the end they answer no purpose?—In a manner analogous to this, the Holy Spirit of God co-operates with the endeavours of man. Our endeavours are necessary to obtain God's assistance: and the more earnestly these endeavours are exerted, the measure of this grace will of course be greater. But, on the other hand, if these endeavours languish, the assistance of heaven will lessen in proportion; and if we behave with obstinate perverseness, it will by degrees wholly fail. It will not always strive with man; but will leave him a melancholy prey to his own vicious inclinations.

As

As to the manner, in which this spiritual assistance is conveyed, we make no inquiry. We can as little comprehend it, as we can the action of our souls upon our bodies. We are sensible, that our souls do act upon our bodies; and it is a belief equally consonant to reason, that the divine influence may act upon our souls. The advocate for natural religion need not be reminded, that among the heathens, a divine influence was a received opinion: The priests of every oracle were supposed to be inspired by their gods; and the heroes of antiquity were universally believed to act under the influence of a supernatural assistance; by which it was conceived they performed actions beyond human power\*.—This shews at least,

\* *Non hæc humanis opibus, non arte magistra:  
Major agit Deus, atque opera ad majora remittit.*

*Æn. xii. 427.*

*Nunquam vir magnus, sine divino afflatu.*

*Cic.*

*Non compitæ mansere comæ, sed pectus anhelum  
Et rabie fera corda tument; majorque videri,  
Nec mortale sonans, afflata est numine quando  
Jam propiore dei*—————

*Æs. vi. 48.*

*Nep.*

least, that there is nothing in this doctrine repugnant to reason.

Nay, the great christian doctrine, that the assistance of heaven was to be obtained by prayer, is not certainly contrary to the dictates of reason. Thus the priestess of Apollo cried out to Æneas, who presented himself to beg the assistance of the god:

—————Cessas in vota precesque,  
Tros, ait, Æneas? cessas? neque enim ante debiscent  
Attonitæ magna ora domus. —————

Immediately upon which,

—————Celidus Tancris per dura cucurrit  
Ossa tremor; fudisque preces rex pectore ab imo.

Æn. vi. 51a

that, that there is nothing more to be said in regard to this.

It is the great object of this work, to show that the doctrine of the Trinity is not only a doctrine of the Christian religion, but also a doctrine of the Christian church.

The first part of the work is devoted to a discussion of the doctrine of the Trinity.

The second part of the work is devoted to a discussion of the doctrine of the Trinity.

The third part of the work is devoted to a discussion of the doctrine of the Trinity.

The fourth part of the work is devoted to a discussion of the doctrine of the Trinity.

The fifth part of the work is devoted to a discussion of the doctrine of the Trinity.

The sixth part of the work is devoted to a discussion of the doctrine of the Trinity.

The seventh part of the work is devoted to a discussion of the doctrine of the Trinity.

The eighth part of the work is devoted to a discussion of the doctrine of the Trinity.

The ninth part of the work is devoted to a discussion of the doctrine of the Trinity.

The tenth part of the work is devoted to a discussion of the doctrine of the Trinity.

## LECTURE VIII.

Holy catholic church explained—communion of saints—forgiveness of sins—scripture-doctrine of sin, and guilt—satisfaction of Christ analogous to nature—sacrifice considered—first in the light of a type—secondly, as a deduction of human reason—useless inquiries into the manner of Christ's satisfaction—different kinds of sin—ignorance—negligence—surprize—habitual—presumptuous.



## LECTURE VIII.

Holy catholic church explained—communion  
of saints—forgiveness of sins—scripture-doc-  
trine of sin, and guilt—justification of Christ  
analogous to nature—faculties considered—  
first in the light of a type—secondly, as a  
deduction of human reason—thirdly, in ap-  
plication into the manner of Christ's satisfaction  
—different kinds of sin—ignorance—negli-  
gence—luxury—habits—prejudices.

WE believe, farther, in the “ holy catholic church,” and the “ communion of saints.”

“ I believe in the holy catholic church,” is certainly a very obscure expression to a protestant; as it is very capable of a popish construction, implying our trust in the infallibility of the church; whereas we attribute infallibility to no church upon earth. The most obvious sense, therefore, in which it can be considered as a protestant article of belief, is this, that we call no particular society of christians a holy catholic church; but believe, that all true and sincere christians, of whatever communion, or particular opinion, shall be the objects of God’s mercy. The patriarchal covenant was confined to a few. The jewish church stood also on a very narrow basis. But the christian church, we believe, is truly catholic: its gracious offers are made to all mankind; and God through Christ will take out of every nation such as shall be saved.

The “ communion of saints,” is an expression equally obscure: and whatever might have been the original meaning of it, it cer-

tainly does not resolve itself into a very obvious one to us. If we say, we mean by it, that good christians living together on earth, should exercise all offices of charity among themselves, no one will contradict the article ; but many perhaps may ask, Why is it made an article of faith ? It relates not so much to faith, as to practice : and the ten commandments might just as well be introduced as articles of our belief.

To this I can only suggest, that it may have a place among the articles of our creed, as a test of our enlarged ideas of christianity, and as opposed to the narrow-mindedness of some christians, who harbour very uncharitable opinions against all who are not of their own church ; and scruple not to shew their opinions by uncharitable actions. The papists particularly deny salvation to any but those of their own communion, and persecute those of other persuasions where they have the power.—In opposition to this, we profess our belief of the great christian law of charity. We believe we ought to think charitably of good christians of all denominations ; and ought to practise a free  
and

and unrestrained communion of charitable offices towards them.

In this light the second part of the article depends upon the first. By the "holy catholic church," we mean all sincere christians, of whatever church, or peculiarity of opinion; and by "the communion of saints," a kind and charitable behaviour towards them.

Though it is probable this was not the original meaning of the article, yet as the reformers of the liturgy did not think it proper to make an alteration, we are led to seek such a sense as appears most consistent with scripture.—We are assured, that this article, as well as the "descent into hell," is not of the same antiquity as the rest of the creed\*.

We profess our belief farther in the "forgiveness of sins."—The scripture-doctrine of sin, and of the guilt, which arises from it, is this.

Man was originally created in a state of innocence, yet liable to fall. Had he persevered in his obedience, he might have enjoyed that happiness, which is the consequence of perfect

\* See Bingham's *Antiq.* vol. iv. chap. 3.

virtue. But when this happy state was lost, his passions and appetites became disordered, and prone to evil. Since that time we have all been, more or less, involved in sin, and are all therefore, in the scripture-language, “under the curse;” that is, we are naturally in a state of unpardoned guilt.

In this mournful exigence, what was to be done? In a state of nature, it is true, we might be sorry for our sins. Nature too might dictate repentance. But sorrow and repentance, though they may put us on our guard for the future, can make no atonement for sins already committed. A resolution to run no more into debt may make us cautious; but can never discharge a debt already contracted\*.

\* Thus Mr. Jenyns expresses the same thing: “The punishment of vice is a debt due to justice, which cannot be remitted without compensation: repentance can be no compensation. It may change a wicked man’s dispositions, and prevent his offending for the future; but can lay no claim to pardon for what is past. If any one by profligacy and extravagance contracts a debt, repentance may make him wiser, and binder him from running into farther distresses, but can never pay off his old bonds, for which he must be ever accountable, unless they are discharged by himself, or some other in his stead.”

*View of the Inter. Evid. p. 112.*

In



In this distress of nature, Jesus Christ came into the world. He threw a light upon the gloom that surrounded us.—He shewed us, that in this world we were lost—that the law of nature could not save us—that the tenor of that law was perfect obedience, with which we could not comply—but that God, through his mediation, offered us a method of regaining happiness—that he came to make that atonement for us, which we could not make for ourselves—and to redeem us from that guilt, which would otherwise overwhelm us—that faith and obedience were, on our parts, the conditions required in this gracious covenant—and that God promised us, on his, the pardon of our sins, and everlasting life—that we were first therefore to be made holy through the gospel of Christ, and then we might expect salvation through his death: “Us, who were  
 “ dead in trespasses and sins, would he quick-  
 “ en. Christ would redeem us from the curse  
 “ of the law. By grace we should be saved  
 “ through faith; and that not of ourselves:  
 “ it was the gift of God. Not of works, lest  
 “ any man should boast.”

This doctrine is generally called the satisfaction or the atonement of Christ, and has given more offence to the deist than almost any part of the christian scheme. “ Could not “ God,” he cries, “ forgive us freely, and “ save us without an expedient which sounds “ so harshly in our ears? The Son of God “ comes down upon earth, and suffers death— “ for what? Why to take upon himself the “ sins of man; and, in the scripture-phrase, “ to nail them to his cross.”

This is surely unbecoming language. How can any one presume to assert, that we may be forgiven freely, unless he can perfectly scan, and thoroughly understand, God’s whole scheme of moral government? What do we know of the nature of unatoned sin and guilt? or of the immutable laws of eternal justice? Can the deist give us any account of these things? Or can he reconcile sin and justice in so satisfactory a manner, even to human reason, as the scripture does, in the account it gives us of the fall of man, and of his restoration through Christ? Nothing is more easy than to cavil: nothing more difficult than to form  
form

form a consistent plan in opposition to the truth.

Again, how can the deist talk of the redemption of the world by Christ, as an expedient that sounds so harshly in our ears? It is true, it is an astonishing event, and, in all its greatness, wholly new and unparalleled: but yet, when God has revealed it to us, our reason totally closes with it. We are reconciled to it by observing it analogous to God's whole scheme of moral government; and to the use of sacrifices, which every where prevailed in the world.

What is the whole state of infancy and youth, from one end to the other, but a continued scene of preventing, and of rescuing from evils, at the expence of pains, and care, and suffering, in the master, the friend, the parent, or whoever acts the part of a kind mediator?—How many, again, after they are advanced in life, do we daily see brought into such circumstances, that, without the friendly mediation of their fellow-creatures, they would be totally ruined? Some, through the means of others, are relieved from painful disorders, under which they might have languished

guished to the end of life. Others, again, through their follies and excesses have brought their affairs into such a state of ruin, as could never be redeemed, unless their friends, by an expensive mediation, should interfere.

These instances, and many others, that might be drawn from the circle and commerce of human life, and many, in which innocence suffers for guilt, shew at least, that the sufferings of Christ for mankind, and the redemption of the world through those sufferings, are analogous to that stated order of things, and ordinary course of moral government, which God has established in the world.

The deist may be farther asked, What he thinks of the origin of sacrifices? A sacrifice is a rite so apparently absurd, that one would hardly imagine any one could prescribe it to himself: and yet we know, that all nations, however remote, and unconnected with each other, joined in it with one consent.—Let us press the deist a little on this head. Whence is it, does he think, that all the world has joined in so strange a rite, as that of putting an innocent creature to death, to appease the  
anger



anger of an incensed God \*? Can he give any rational account of its origin and institution?—Or is he constrained to allow with us, that the only rational account of this matter is, that the use of sacrifices was instituted by God himself, and enjoined to our first parents, immediately on the fall, and so continued, as a type of that great sacrifice, which was afterwards to be offered for the sins of men?—A type, we know, is intended as an introduction to the

\* It would be endless to quote passages from heathen writers. I shall just mention a few which first occur. When Horatius killed his sister, Livy tells us, he was pardoned, “*Quibusdam piacularibus sacrificiis factis.*” Lib. 1.

Dido proposing to appease Jupiter, orders one of her attendants,

— *pecudes secum, & monstrata piacula ducat.*

*Æn.* iv. 636.

The idea of an atonement is thus strongly expressed by Virgil:

*Unum pro multis dabitur caput.*——

*Æn.* v. 815.

But still stronger is a passage in Cæsar, where, speaking of the human sacrifices of the Germans, he says, “*Pro vita hominis nisi vita hominis reddatur, non posse aliter deorum immortalium numen placari arbitrantur. Publicaque ejusdem generis habent instituta sacrificia.*”

*Cæs. Com. lib. vi.*

thing



thing typified : and men through all ages, from father to son, have acquiesced in a practice, without knowing from whence they had it, that they might silently fulfil, though without intending it, the secret purposes of heaven ; which meant by this rite to introduce gradually the idea of that great sacrifice which was to be made for the sins of the world ; and which, however late it became visible, was slain in effect “ from the foundation of the “ world,” and began unquestionably to operate for the good of man, from the instant of the fall. Sacrifices might perhaps then be, what the Lord’s supper now is, a sort of partaking of the body and blood of Christ. And what is still more remarkable, the type became universally abolished, wherever it became fulfilled.

Does the unbeliever acquiesce in this account of the origin of sacrifice ? Or, will he rather resolve it into some general deduction of human reason, and attribute it to the mere invention of man ?

Be it so. On this ground let us follow him : and on this ground he must at least allow, that the use of sacrifice proves all mankind

kind to have had, from nature, an idea, that they stood in need of other merits, besides their own, to redeem them from sin—that the light of reason pointed the necessity of some atonement to make up their own deficiencies—and that offering the life of an innocent creature for their transgressions, came the nearest of any thing, they could conceive, to the idea of such an atonement.

Thus this great article of our faith, though so offensive to many of the advocates for reason, appears both similar to God's moral government, and agreeable to the general sense of mankind. God is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever: and a connection, a uniformity, and analogy run through all his works, if it was in our power to trace them with accuracy, and precision.

If the unbeliever still inquires farther; and cannot acquiesce without a plain account of the manner, in which the death of Christ satisfies God for the sins of the world, we must here be constrained to leave him. In such inquiries he will rarely meet with satisfaction. But let him be consistent. Let him be an universal sceptic. Let him doubt a future state.

Let

Let him doubt the immortality of his soul. Let him doubt even his own existence: for which of these things can he explain?

If we think justly, we should distinguish between what is, and what is not, capable of proof. Let us try the truth of scripture by every method, that human reason can invent: but let us not imagine, that human reason can comprehend the whole system of the Christian religion. We enter freely into a rational proof of the being of a God: but we do not presume to comprehend his attributes. What relates to man in the scheme of our redemption is very clear. God's part indeed is beyond our comprehension. But with this we have little to do. What is it to us, in what manner God performs this gracious work? Our concern lies nearer home. God has offered us the pardon of our sins, and everlasting life through the merits of Christ. But if, in the niceness of our casuistry, we reject this offer,—we may have reason to repent—if we reject it through negligence, we certainly shall.

That we may have a more complete view of the danger of sin (the cause of our misery, and  
of

of our Saviour's death), I shall conclude this article with enumerating its several kinds.

And first I shall mention the lightest in this catalogue, sins of ignorance. A man may commit a sin without knowing it. He may have his doubts, at the time of acting, without the means of solving them. His ignorance does not alter the nature of the action itself; though it mitigates the guilt in him. Such sins indeed, one would hope, are small offences in the eyes of a merciful God:—and yet St. Paul heavily bewails his having persecuted the church of Christ, notwithstanding he did it ignorantly. But St. Paul had few sins to repent of, but those of ignorance.

Sins of negligence are more involved in guilt. Not to use the opportunities we have, argues great coolness in religion; and great inattention to our duty.—And on this head we should be much on our guard: for many sins, which may perhaps appear to be those of ignorance only, may in fact be charged upon our own negligence, and want of attention to those means of knowing better, which God hath afforded us.

Next



Next to these we may rank sins of surprize; into which we are commonly betrayed by some sudden temptation. Sins of this kind should be sincerely repented of, and manfully withstood.—If through our indulgence we suffer them to get ground upon us, they are no longer sins of surprize: they change their name; and must be classed under the head of habitual sins.

Habitual sins are stained with a very high degree of guilt. When we thus become the slaves of vice, our minds are tainted, and the sense of religion is lost. Even smaller sins, when their fibres are thus woven into our nature, attain enormous growth. Of this also we may be assured, that when we have thus lost the command of ourselves, we may proceed any length.—If a proper temptation arises, what is there to check us?—We may be carried to the last degree of wickedness; to which the scriptures give the name of presumptuous sins.

By presumptuous sins are meant those black crimes; which have no want of knowledge to excuse—no sudden temptation to extenuate; but are acted with deliberate contrivance; in  
open



open defiance of law, conscience, and religion; and attended with all those horrid circumstances, which shew the last depravity of human nature.

From the guilt of every kind of sin let us guard with all our care. In presumptuous sins none of you, I should hope, can well be involved. The mind yet unhardened, starts with horror at such black transgressions. Endeavour then to keep alive this quick sensibility; and preserve yourselves at least from habitual sins: for these are what first corrupt you. If you are not intangled in these, you may hope, that all your sins of negligence and surprize, if you guard against them as well as human frailty will permit, may find forgiveness through the merits of Christ, at the hands of that God, who knowing the infirmities of his creatures, is not extreme to mark what they have done amiss.



## LECTURE IX.

Immortality of the soul—agreeable to reason—  
resurrection of the body—scripture-doctrine  
on this head—application of it—future state  
of happiness—how described in scripture—  
future state of misery—the eternity of it a  
doctrine of reason—scripture-account of it—  
application of the doctrine

## LECTURE IX.

Immortality of the soul—agencies of resurrection—  
restoration of the body—location of the future state  
of happiness—how defined in Scripture—  
future state of misery—the eternity of it—  
location of it—Scripture—agencies of  
resurrection of the body.

**W**E believe farther “ in the resurrection  
“ of the body.”—This article pre-  
sumes our belief in the immortality of the soul.

What that principle of life is, which we call the soul; how it is distinguished from mere animal life; how it is connected with the body; and in what state it subsists, when all bodily functions cease; are among those indissoluble questions, with which nature every where abounds. But notwithstanding the difficulties, which attend the discussion of these questions, the truth itself hath in all ages of the world been the popular creed. Men believed their souls were immortal from their own feelings—from observing the progressive state of the soul, capable, even after the body had attained its full strength, of still higher improvements both in knowledge, and in habits of virtue—from the analogy of all nature, dying and reviving in every part—from their situation here so apparently incomplete in itself; and from a variety of other topics, which the reason of man was able to suggest.—But though nature could obscurely suggest this great truth; yet christianity alone threw a



clear light upon it, and impressed it with a full degree of conviction upon our minds.

But the article before us proceeds a step farther. It not only implies the immortality of the soul; but asserts the resurrection of the body.—Nor was this doctrine wholly new to nature. In the heathen conceptions of a future life, we always find the soul in an embodied state. It was airy indeed and bloodless; but still it had the parts of a human body, and could perform its operations.

In these particulars the scripture does not gratify our curiosity. From various passages we are led to believe, that the body shall certainly rise again: but in what manner, or of what substance, we pretend not to examine. We learn “that it is sown in corruption, and  
“ raised in incorruption; that it is sown in  
“ dishonour, and raised in glory; that it is  
“ sown a natural body, and raised a spiritual  
“ body:” from all which we gather, that whatever sameness our bodies may have, they will hereafter take a more spiritualized nature; and will not be subject to those infirmities, to which they were subject on earth. Farther on this head, it behoves us not to inquire.

Instead

Instead, therefore, of entering into any metaphysical disquisitions of identity, or any other curious points, in which this deep subject might engage us, all which, as they are founded on uncertainty, must end in doubt, it is better to draw this doctrine, as well as all others, into practical use: and the use we ought to make of it is, to pay that regard to our bodies, which is due to them—not vainly to adorn—not luxuriously to pamper them; but to keep them as much as possible from the pollutions of the world; and to lay them down in the grave undefiled, there to be sealed up in expectation of a blessed resurrection.

Lastly, we believe “in the life everlasting;” in which article we express our faith in the eternity of a future state of rewards and punishments.

This article is nearly related to the last, and is involved in the same obscurity. In what the reward of the virtuous will consist, after death, our reason gives us no information. Conjecture indeed it will, in a matter which so nearly concerns us; and it hath conjectured in all ages: but information it hath none, except from the word of God; and even there,

our limited capacities can receive it only in general and figurative expressions. We are told, “there will then reign fulness of joy, “and pleasures for evermore—that the righteous shall have an inheritance incorruptible, “undefiled, that fadeth not away—where they “shall shine forth, as the sun, in the presence “of their father—where error, and sin, and “misery shall be no more—where shall be assembled an innumerable company of angels, “the general assembly of the church, the spirits of just men made perfect—that they “shall neither hunger, nor thirst any more— “that all tears shall be wiped from their eyes “—that there shall be neither death, nor sorrow, nor pain.”

From these, and such expressions as these, though we cannot collect the entire nature of a future state of happiness, yet we can easily gather a few circumstances, which must of course attend it; as, that it will be very great—that it will last for ever—that it will be of a nature entirely different from the happiness of this world—that, as in this world, our passions and appetites prevail; in the next, reason and virtue

virtue will have the superiority—"hunger and  
 "thirst, tears and sorrow," we read, "will  
 "be no more"—that is, all uneasy passions  
 and appetites will then be annihilated—all vain  
 fears will be then removed—all anxious and  
 intruding cares—and we shall feel ourselves  
 compleat and perfect; and our happiness, not  
 dependent, as here, upon a thousand preca-  
 rious circumstances, both within and without  
 ourselves, but consistent, uniform, and stable.

On the other hand, we pretend not to in-  
 quire in what the punishment of the wicked  
 consists. In the scripture we find many ex-  
 pressions, from which we gather, that it will  
 be very great. It is there called "an ever-  
 "lasting fire, prepared for the devil and his  
 "angels—where the worm dieth not, and the  
 "fire is never quenched—where shall be weep-  
 "ing, and gnashing of teeth—where the  
 "wicked shall drink of the wrath of God,  
 "poured without mixture, into the cup of his  
 "indignation—where they shall have no rest,  
 "neither by day nor night."

Though it becomes us certainly to put our  
 interpretations with the greatest caution and  
 humility on such passages as these; yet "the  
 "worm



"worm that never dieth," and "the fire that is never quenched," are strong expressions, and hardly to be evaded by any refinements of verbal criticism. Let the deist bravely argue down his fears, by demonstrating the absurdity of consuming a spirit in material fire. Let him fully explain the nature of future punishment; and convince us, that where it cannot reform, it must be unjust.—But let us, with more modesty, lay our hands humbly upon our breasts, confess our ignorance; revere the appointments of God, whatever they may be; and prepare to meet them with holy hope, and trembling joy, and awful submission to his righteous will.

To the unenlightened heathen the eternity of future punishments appeared no such unreasonable doctrine. Their state of the damned was of eternal duration. A vulture for ever tore those entrails, which were forever renewed\*.

\* *Rostroq. immanis vultur obunco  
Immortale jecur tundens, facundaq. pænis  
Viscera.* —————

*Æn. vi. 596.*

————— *Sedet, æternumq. sedebit  
Infelix Theseus.* —————

*Ib. 616.*

Of



Of one thing, however, we may be well assured (which may set us entirely at rest in all our inquiries on this deep subject), that every thing will, in the end, be right—that a just and merciful God must act agreeably to justice and mercy—and that the first of these attributes will most assuredly be tempered with the latter.

From the doctrine of future rewards and punishments, the great and most convincing practical truth which arises, is, that we cannot exert too much pains in qualifying ourselves for the happiness of a future world. As this happiness will last for ever, how beneficial will be the exchange—this world, “which is but  
“ for a moment, for that everlasting weight  
“ of glory, which fadeth not away.”

Vice, on the other hand, receives the greatest discouragement from this doctrine, as every sin we commit in this world may be considered as an addition to an everlasting account in the next.

Of one thing, however, we may be well assured, that which may be as certainly as in all the judgments on this deep subject, that every man, in the end, he fights—his soul and his body—God must act separately to justice and mercy—and that the gift of life and health will most abundantly be bestowed with the inner. From the doctrine of future rewards and punishments, the greatest and most convincing practical truth which arises is, that we cannot exert too much pains in our present and our lives to be happy in a future world. As this happiness will last for ever, how beneficial will it be to us—this world, "which is but for a moment, for that everything we have is passing away, which is not away." On the other hand, receives the great rewardment from the doctrine, as every man we commit in this world may be considered as an addition to an everlasting account in the

DEC-

## LECTURE X.

The ten commandments—not a compleat rule of duty—division of them, and short commentary on them—our duty to God—belief—fear—love—objections to the goodness of God—measures of the love of God.

HAVING

## LECTURE X.

The ten commandments—not a complete rule  
in duty—division of them, and their com-  
munity on them—our duty to God—believe  
—love—obey—to the goods of  
God—means of the love of God.

HAVING

HAVING considered the articles of our faith, we proceed to the rules of our practice. These, we know, are of such importance, that, let our faith be what it will, unless it influence our lives, it is of no value. At the same time, if it be what it ought to be, it will certainly have this influence.

On this head, the ten commandments are first placed before us; from which the composers of the catechism, as well as many other divines, have drawn a compleat system of christian duties. But this is perhaps rather too much\*. Both Moses, in the law, and

\* In the fourth volume of bishop Warburton's commentary on Pope's works, in the second satyr of Dr. Donne, are these lines:

*Of whose strange crimes no canonist can tell  
In which commandment's large contents they dwell.*

"The original," says the bishop, "is more humorous.

"In which commandment's large receipt they dwell;

"as if the ten commandments were so wide, as to stand ready to receive

"every thing, which either the law of nature, or the gospel commands.

"A just ridicule on those practical commentators, as they are called, who

"include all moral and religious duties within them."

Christ



Christ in the gospel, seem to have enlarged greatly on morals: and each of them, especially the latter, to have added many practical rules, which do not obviously fall under any of the commandments.

But though we cannot call the decalogue a compleat rule of duty, we accept it with the utmost reverence, as the first great written law that ever God communicated to man. We consider it as an eternal monument, inscribed by the finger of God himself, with a few strong, indelible characters; not defining the minutiae of morals; but injoining those great duties only, which have the most particular influence on the happiness of society; and prohibiting those enormous crimes, which are the greatest sources of its distress.

The ten commandments are divided into two parts, from their being originally written upon two tables. From hence one table is supposed to contain our duty to God; the other, our duty to man. But this seems to be an unauthorized division; and hath a tendency to a verbal mistake; as if some duties were owing to God; and others to man: whereas in fact we know that all duties are equally owing to God.

—How—

—However, if we avoid this misconception, the division into our duty to God, and our duty to man, may be a convenient one.—The four first commandments are contained in the first table : the remaining six in the second.

At the head of them stands a prohibition to acknowledge more than one God.

The second commandment bears a near relation to the first. The former forbids polytheism ; the latter idolatry : and with this belief, and practice, which generally accompanied each other, all the nations of the earth were tainted, when these commandments were given : especially those nations, by whom the Jews were surrounded.

The third commandment enjoins reverence to God's name. This is a strong religious restraint in private life ; and as a solemn oath is the strictest obligation among men, nothing can be of greater service to society, than to hold it in general respect.

The fourth commands the observance of the sabbath ; as one of the best means of preserving a sense of God, and of religion in the minds of men.

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The

The second table begins with injoining obedience to parents ; a duty in a peculiar manner adapted to the jewish state, before any regular government was erected. The temporal promise, which guards it, and which can relate only to the Jews, may either mean a promise of long life to each individual, who observed the precept : or, of stability to the whole nation upon the general observance of it : which is perhaps a better interpretation.

The five next commandments are prohibitions of the most capital crimes, which pollute the heart of man, and injure the peace of society.

The first of them forbids murder, which is the greatest injury that one man can do another ; as of all crimes the damage in this is the most irreparable.

The seventh commandment forbids adultery. The black infidelity, and injury which accompany this crime ; the confusion in families, which often succeeds it ; and the general tendency it hath to destroy all the domestic happiness of society, stain it with a very high degree of guilt.

The

The security of our property is the object of the eighth commandment.

The security of our characters, is the object of the ninth.

The tenth restrains us not only from the actual commission of sin; but from those bad inclinations, which give it birth.

After the commandments follows a commentary upon them, intitled, "our duty to God," and "our duty to our neighbour:" the latter of which might more properly be intitled, "Our duty to our neighbour, and ourselves."—These seem intended as an explanation of the commandments on christian principles; with the addition of other duties, which do not properly fall under any of them. On these we shall be more large.

The first part of our duty to God, is, "to believe in him;" which is the foundation of all religion, and therefore offers itself first to our consideration. But this great point hath been already considered\*.

The next branch of our duty to God, is to fear him. The fear of God is impressed equal-

\* See page 70.



ly upon the righteous man, and the sinner. But the fear of the sinner consists only in the dread of punishment. It is the necessary consequence of guilt ; and is not that fear, which we consider as a duty. The fear of God here meant, consists in that reverential awe, that constant apprehension of his presence, which secures us from offending him.—When we are before our superiors, we naturally feel a respect, which prevents our doing any thing indecent in their sight. Such (only in a higher degree) should be our reverence of God, in whose sight, we know, we always stand. If a sense of the divine presence hath such an influence over us, as to check the bad tendency of our thoughts, words, and actions ; we may properly be said to be impressed with the fear of God.—If not, we neglect one of the best means of checking vice, which the whole circle of religious restraint affords.

Some people go a step farther ; and say, that as every degree of light behaviour, though short of an indecency, is improper before our superiors ; so is it likewise in the presence of almighty God, who is so much superior to every thing, that can be called great on earth.

But



But this is the language of superstition: Mirth, within the bounds of innocence, cannot be offensive to God. He is offended only with vice. Vice, in the lowest degree, is hateful to him: but a formal, set behaviour, can be necessary only to preserve human distinctions.

The next duty to God is that of love, which is founded upon his goodness to his creatures. Even this world, mixed as it is with evil, exhibits various marks of the goodness of the Deity. Most men indeed place their affections too much upon it, and rate it at too high a value: but in the opinion even of wise men, it deserves some estimation. The acquisition of knowledge, in all its branches; the intercourse of society; the contemplation of the wonderful works of God, and all the beautiful scenes of nature; nay, even the low inclinations of animal life, when indulged with sobriety and moderation, furnish various modes of pleasure and enjoyment.

Let this world however go for little. In contemplating a future life, the enjoyments of this are lost. It is in the contemplation of futurity, that the christian views the goodness of

God in the fullest light. When we see the Deity engaging himself by covenant to make our short abode here a preparation for our eternal happiness hereafter—when we are assured, that this happiness is not only eternal, but of the purest and most perfect kind—when we see God, as a father, opening all his stores of love and kindness, to bring back to himself a race of creatures fallen from their original perfection, and totally lost through their own folly, perverseness, and wickedness; then it is that the evils of life seem as atoms in the sun-beam; the divine nature appears overflowing with goodness to mankind, and calls forth every exertion of our gratitude and love.

That the enjoyments of a future state, in whatever those enjoyments consist, are the gift of God, is sufficiently obvious: but with regard to the government of this world, there is often among men a sort of infidelity, which ascribes all events to their own prudence and industry. Things appear to run in a stated course; and the finger of God, which acts unseen, is never supposed.

And, no doubt, our own industry and prudence have a great share in procuring for us the blessings

blessings of life. God hath annexed them as the reward of our exertions. But can we suppose, that such exertions will be of any service to us, unless the providence of God throw opportunities in our way? All the means of worldly happiness are surely no other than the means of his government. Moses saw among the Jews a kind of infidelity like this, when he forbade the people to say in their hearts, "My power, and the might of my hands hath gotten me this wealth:" whereas, he adds, they ought to remember, "That it is the Lord who giveth power to get wealth."

Others again have objected to the goodness of God, his permission of evil. A good God, say they, would have prevented it; and have placed his creatures in a situation beyond the distresses of life.

With regard to man, there seems to be no great difficulty in this matter. It is enough, surely, that God hath put the means of comfort in our power. In the natural world, he hath given us remedies against hunger, cold, and disease; and in the moral world, against the mischief of sin. Even death itself, the last great evil, he hath shewn us how we may

change into the most consummate blessing. A state of trial \* therefore, and a future world, seem easily to set things to rights on this head.

The misery of the brute creation is indeed more unaccountable. But have we not the modesty to suppose, that this difficulty may be owing to our ignorance? And that on the strength of what we know of the wisdom of God, we may venture to trust him for those parts which we cannot comprehend?

One truth, after all, is very apparent, that if we should argue ourselves into atheism by the untractableness of these subjects, we should be so far from getting rid of our difficulties, that, if we reason justly, ten thousand greater would arise, either from considering the world under no ruler, or under one of our own imagining.

There remains one farther consideration with regard to the love of God, and that is, the measure of it. We are told we ought to love him "with all our heart, with all our soul, "and with all our strength." These are strong expressions, and seem to imply a greater

\* See page 31, &c.



warmth of affection, than many people may perhaps find they can exert. The affections of some are naturally cool, and little excited by any objects. The guilty person is he, whose affections are warm in every thing but religion. —The obvious meaning therefore of the expression is, that whether our affections are cool or warm, we should make God our chief good—that we should set our affections more upon him, than upon any thing else—and that, for his sake, and for the sake of his laws, we should be ready to resign every thing we have, and even life itself. So that the words seem nearly of the same import with those of the apostle, “Set your affections on things above, and not on things on the earth.”





## LECTURE XI.

Observance of the sabbath—jewish sabbath—  
difference between it and the christian sabbath—moral ends of the sabbath—public worship—on what reason it is founded—sabbath a mean of instruction—trust in God—honour due to God's name—objections against the use of oaths answered—perjury—curfing—common swearing.

Q U R

SECRET

OUR next duty to God, is, “to worship him, to give him thanks, to put our whole trust in him, and to call upon him.”

We have here the duty of prayer recommended to us: but I shall have occasion, in treating of the Lord’s prayer, to speak more fully hereafter on this subject. What I shall say at present, shall be confined to the observance of the sabbath.

The jewish sabbath was instituted to commemorate the creation of the world, and the redemption from Egypt. These great events, which it held out, impressed upon the people a strong sense of God’s power; their dependence upon him; and the propriety of worship.

The great event held out by the christian sabbath, is the resurrection of Christ. And for this reason the christian hath changed his sabbath from the seventh day of the week to the first.

There is another distinction between the jewish and the christian sabbath. The former was observed with that ceremonial strictness which ran through the whole jewish law. The more liberal spirit of the gospel hath freed  
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the christian sabbath from these observances ; and retains only its moral ends, public worship, and instruction. By these ends therefore our sabbath is regulated ; and nothing prophanes it, but what opposes them.—On the head of public worship much might be said.

It is a testimony of that reverence which is due to the supreme Being. The general sense of mankind considers it as such. The heathen nations always approached their gods in public assemblies. The respect of a public resort, on solemn occasions, is paid even to earthly princes.—If it tends therefore in any degree to impress an idea of reverence, it is certainly due on all occasions, where the Almighty is concerned.

An attendance also on the public service of the church is giving a public testimony of our faith. It is that test, which society demands of all its members. By the laws of the community it is exacted ; and it tends undoubtedly to create a confidence among men.

These public assemblies are also a kind of connecting bond among christians. Every part of the service points out that love, and union, which should subsist among them. It places  
them



them in the light of children of one common parent ; joining, with one consent, in begging blessings, which concern them all.

Public worship also is particularly accommodated to deprecate national calamities, and implore national blessings ; as closet devotion is more the vehicle of our private requests. It is commonly also esteemed the most animated species of devotion, as the zeal of one may be supposed to excite the zeal of another.—In the generality indeed of our cold, unanimated assemblies, little of this is seen : but if we were present at an assembly, where every member was really in earnest, we must be much unacquainted with the spirit of devotion, if we did not, in some degree, catch the flame.

We must also particularly remember, that great stress is laid upon this species of devotion in scripture ; where we read frequently of assemblies meeting to praise God on the first day of the week.—Nor is it perhaps unreasonable to suppose, that public devotion draws God's favour, in a peculiar manner, upon our prayers. “ Where two or three are gathered together,” says Christ, “ there am I in the midst of them.”

Secondly,

Secondly, the sabbath is the great mean of instruction. If people of education in this enlightened age, think instruction of less consequence to them, yet at least they must think it of great use to the vulgar. It is a common opinion, and the better for being so, that were it not for the sabbath, religion itself would be lost. And if people of superior stations do not give the observance of it their sanction, it will not long have credit among the vulgar.

Since therefore the observance of the sabbath is founded upon so many wise and just reasons, what have they to answer for, who not only neglect this institution themselves, but bring it by their example into contempt with others? I speak not to those who make it a day of common diversion; who, laying aside all decency, and breaking through all civil and religious regulations, spend it in the most licentious amusements: such people are past all reproof: but I speak to those, who in other things profess themselves to be serious people; and, one might hope, would act right, when they were convinced what was so.

But

But our prayers, whether in public, or in private, are only an idle parade, unless we put our trust in God.

By putting our trust in God, is meant depending upon him, as our happiness, and our refuge.

Human nature is always endeavouring either to remove pain ; or, if ease be obtained, to acquire happiness. And those things are certainly the most eligible, which in these respects are the most effectual. The world, it is true, makes us flattering promises : but who can say that it will keep them ? We consist of two parts, a body, and a soul. Both of these want the means of happiness, as well as the removal of evil. But the world cannot even afford them to the body. Its means of happiness, to those who depend upon them as such, are, in a thousand instances, unsatisfying. Even, at best, they will fail us in the end. While pain, diseases, and death, shew us, that the world can afford no refuge against bodily distress. And if it cannot afford the means of happiness, and of security, to the body, how much less

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can we suppose it able to afford them to the soul?

Nothing then, we see, in this world, is a sufficient foundation for trust: nor indeed can any thing be, but almighty God, who affords us the only means of happiness, and is our only real refuge in distress. On him, the more we trust, the greater we shall feel our security; and that man who has, on just religious motives, confirmed in himself this trust, wants nothing else to secure his happiness. The world may wear what aspect it will: it is not on it that he depends. As far as prudence goes, he endeavours to avoid the evils of life: but when they fall to his share (as sooner or later we must all share them) he resigns himself into the hands of that God who made him, and who knows best how to dispose of him. On him he thoroughly depends, and with him he has a constant intercourse by prayer; trusting, that whatever happens is agreeable to that just government, which God has established; and that, of consequence, it must be best.

We



We are enjoined next “to honour God’s  
“holy name.”

The name of God is accompanied with such ideas of greatness and reverence, that it should never pass our lips without suggesting those ideas. Indeed it should never be mentioned, but with a kind of awful hesitation, and on the most solemn occasions—either in serious discourse; or, when we invoke God in prayer; or, when we swear by his name.

In this last light we are here particularly enjoined to honour the name of God. A solemn oath is an appeal to God himself\*; and is intitled to our utmost respect, were it only in a political light; as in all human concerns it is the strongest test of veracity; and has been approved as such by the wisdom of all nations.

Some religionists have disapproved the use of oaths, under the idea of prophaneness. The language of the sacred writers conveys a different idea. One of them says, “An oath for

\* The poets rule in the drama, is exactly what ought to be the Christian’s in the use of oaths:

*Nec Deus interfit, nisi dignus vindice nodus  
Inciderit.*



“ confirmation is an end of all strife : ” another, “ I take God for record upon my soul : ” and a third, “ God is my witness. ”

To the use of oaths others have objected, that they are nugatory. The good man will speak the truth without an oath ; and the bad man, cannot be held by one. And this would be true, if mankind were divided into good and bad : but as they are generally of a mixed character, we may well suppose, that many would venture a simple falsehood ; who would yet be startled at the idea of perjury\*.

As an oath therefore taken in a solemn manner, and on a proper occasion, may be considered as one of the highest acts of religion ; so perjury, or false swearing, is certainly one of the highest acts of impiety ; and the greatest dishonour we can possibly shew to the name of God. It is, in effect, either denying our belief in a God, or his power to punish. Other crimes wish to escape the notice of heaven : this is daring the Almighty to his face.

\* They who attend our courts of justice, often see instances among the common people of their asserting roundly what they will either refuse to swear ; or when sworn, will not assert.

After

After perjury, the name of God is most dishonoured by the horrid practice of cursing: Its effects in society it is true, are not so mischievous as those of perjury; nor is it so deliberate an act; but yet it conveys a still more horrid idea. Indeed if there be one wicked practice more peculiarly diabolical, than another; it is this: for no employment can be conceived more suitable to infernal spirits, than that of spending their rage and impotence in curses, and execrations. If this shocking vice were not so dreadfully familiar to our ears, it could not fail to strike us with the utmost horror.

We next consider common swearing; a sin so universally practised, that one would imagine some great advantage, in the way either of pleasure or profit, attended it. The wages of iniquity afford some temptation: but to commit sin without any wages, is a strange species of infatuation.—May we then ask the common swearer, what the advantages are, which arise from this practice?

It will be difficult to point one out.—Perhaps it may be said, that it adds strength to an affirmation. But if a man commonly strengthen

his affirmations in this way, we may venture to assert, that the practice will tend rather to lessen, than confirm, his credit. It shews plainly what he himself thinks of his own veracity. We never prop a building, till it becomes ruinous.

Some forward youth may think, that an oath adds an air and spirit to his discourse; that it is manly and important; and gives him consequence. We may whisper one secret in his ear, which he may be assured is a truth.—These airs of manliness give him consequence with those only, whose commendation is disgrace: others he only convinces, at how early an age he wishes to be thought profligate.

Perhaps he may imagine that an oath gives force, and terror to his threatnings.—In this he may be right; and the more horribly wicked he grows, the greater object of terror he may make himself. On this plan the devil affords him a compleat pattern for imitation.

Paltry as these apologies are, I should suppose, the practice of common swearing has little more to say for itself.—Those however, who can argue in favour of this sin, I should fear, there is little chance to reclaim.—But it  
is

is probable, that the greater part of such as are addicted to it, act rather from habit, than principle. To deter such persons from indulging so pernicious a habit, and to shew them, that it is worth their while to be at some pains to conquer it, let us now see what arguments may be produced on the other side.

In the first place, common swearing leads to perjury. He who is addicted to swear on every trifling occasion, cannot but often, I had almost said, unavoidably, give the sanction of an oath to an untruth. And though I should hope such perjury is not a sin of so heinous a nature, as what, in judicial matters, is called wilful, and corrupt; yet it is certainly stained with a very great degree of guilt.

But secondly, common swearing is a large stride towards wilful and corrupt perjury; in as much as it makes a solemn oath to be received with less reverence. If nobody dared to take an oath, but on proper occasions, an oath would be received with respect: but when we are accustomed to hear swearing the common language of our streets, it is no wonder, that people make light of oaths on every occasion;



and that judicial, commercial, qualifying, and official oaths, are all treated with so much indifference.

Thirdly, common swearing may be considered as an act of great irreverence to God; and as such, implying also a great indifference to religion. If it would disgrace a chief magistrate to suffer appeals on every trifling, or ludicrous occasion; we may at least think it as disrespectful to the Almighty.—If we lose our reverence for God, it is impossible we can retain it for his laws. You scarce remember a common swearer, who was in other respects an exact christian.

But above all, we should be deterred from common swearing by the positive command of our Saviour, which is founded unquestionably upon the wickedness of the practice: “You have heard,” saith Christ, “that it hath been said by them of old time, thou shalt not forswear thyself: but I say unto you, swear not at all; neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne, neither by the earth for it is his footstool: but let your communication” (that is, your ordinary conversation)

“be



“ be yea, yea, nay, nay; for whatsoever is  
 “ more than these cometh of evil.”—St. James  
 also, with great emphasis pressing his master’s  
 words, says, “ Above all things, my brethren,  
 “ swear not; neither by heaven, neither by  
 “ the earth, neither by any other oath: but  
 “ let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay,  
 “ lest you fall into condemnation.”

I shall just add, on this subject, that two  
 things are to be avoided, which are nearly al-  
 lied to swearing.

The first is, the use of light exclamations,  
 and invocations upon God, on every trivial  
 occasion. We cannot have much reverence  
 for God himself, when we treat his name in so  
 familiar a manner; and may assure ourselves,  
 that we are indulging a practice, which must  
 weaken impressions, that ought to be preserved  
 as strong as possible.

Secondly, such idle expressions; and wanton  
 phrases, as sound like swearing, are to be a-  
 voided; and are often therefore indulged by  
 silly people, for the sake of the sound; who  
 think (if they think at all) that they add to  
 their discourse the spirit of swearing without  
 the

the guilt of it. Such people had better lay aside, together with swearing, every appearance of it. These appearances may both offend, and mislead others; and with regard to themselves, may end in realities. At least, they shew an inclination to swearing: and an inclination to vice, indulged, is really vice.

## LECTURE XII.

Honour due to God's word—books of scripture—patriarchal history—jewish history—prophetic writings—poetical, and moral—new testament—history of Christ, and the early age of the church—epistles and revelations—use and application of scripture—what it is to serve God truly—what it is to serve him all the days of our life.

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DECLARATION

Honour due to God—word—book of scripture—  
ecclesiastical history—jews—christ—pro-  
phets—wisdom—ethical, and moral—new  
and ancient—history of Christ, and the early  
ages of the church—doctrines and revelations  
—and application of scripture—what it  
teaches—what God truly—what it is to love  
and in the name of our Lord

AS we are enjoined to honour God's holy name, so are we enjoined also "to honour his holy word."

By God's holy word, we mean both the old testament and the new. The connection between them is so close, that no man can pay a regard to the one, without paying it also to the other. The new testament is not only of the same texture with the old; but the very same web, as it were, only more unfolded.

The books of the old testament open with the earliest accounts of time, earlier than any human records reach; and yet, in many instances, they are strengthened by human records. The heathen mythology is often grounded on remnants of the sacred story; and many of the bible-events are recorded, however imperfectly, in prophane history. The very face of nature bears witness to the deluge.

In the history of the patriarchs is exhibited a most beautiful picture of the simplicity of ancient manners; and of genuine nature, unadorned indeed by science, but impressed strongly with a sense of religion. This gives an air of greatness and dignity, to all the sentiments



timents and actions of these exalted characters.

The patriarchal history is followed by the jewish. Here we have the principal events of that peculiar nation; which lived under a theocracy, and was set apart to preserve, and propagate \* the knowledge of the true God through those ages of ignorance, antecedent to Christ. Here too we find those types, and representations, which the apostle to the Hebrews calls "the shadows of good things to come."

To those books, which contain the legislation, and history of the Jews, succeed the prophetic writings. As the time of the promise drew still nearer, the notices of its approach became stronger. The kingdom of the Messiah, which was but obscurely shadowed by the ceremonies of the jewish law, was marked in stronger lines by the prophets, and proclaimed in more intelligible language. The office of the Messiah, his ministry, his life, his actions, his death, and his resurrection, are all

\* See this subject very learnedly treated in one of the first chapters of *Jenkins's reasonableness of Christianity*.

very distinctly held out. It is true, the Jews, explaining the warm figures of the prophetic language too literally, and applying to a temporal dominion those expressions, which were intended only as descriptive of a spiritual, were offended at the meanness of Christ's appearance on earth; and would not own him for that Messiah, whom their prophets had foretold; though these very prophets, when they used a less figurative language, had described him, as he really was, "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."

To these books are added several others, poetical and moral, which administer much instruction, and matter of meditation to devout minds.

The new testament contains first the simple history of Christ, as recorded in the four gospels. In this history also are delivered those excellent instructions, which our Saviour occasionally gave his disciples; the precepts and the example blended together.

To the gospels succeeds an account of the lives and actions of some of the principal apostles; together with the early state of the christian church.

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The epistles of several of the apostles, particularly of St. Paul, to some of the new established churches, make another part. Our Saviour had promised to endow his disciples with power from on high to compleat the great work of publishing the gospel: and in the epistles that work is compleated. The truths and doctrines of the christian religion are here still more unfolded, and enforced: as the great scheme of our redemption, was now finished by the death of Christ.

The sacred volume is concluded with the revelations of St. John; which are supposed to contain a prophetic description of the future state of the church. Some of these prophecies, it is thought on very good grounds, are already fulfilled; and others, which now, as sublime descriptions only, amuse the imagination, will probably, in the future ages of the church, be the objects of the understanding also.

Such is the word of God, which we are enjoined to honour. And this honour, we may be assured, is best shewn by applying these holy writings to the uses for which God intended them. We should take the bible into our hands, as we should approach a divine  
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instructor, with a habit of mind—not to cavil—  
—not to create objections—not to quote wan-  
tonly—not to apply to ludicrous purposes (all  
which is certainly dishonouring it) but with a  
pious inclination to improve our hearts, by  
learning from it the duties of christianity—by  
learning from it, how to live, and how to  
die.

This divine book furnishes a great variety of  
matter for our meditation. “It is profitable,”  
we are told, “for doctrine, for reproof, for  
“correction and instruction.” When we find  
in it moral rules laid down for our conduct,  
we should compare our actions with those  
rules: and where motives are assigned, we  
should try our hearts by these too, and examine,  
whether they are right in the sight of God.  
When it instructs us to have our conversation  
in heaven, and to set our affections on things  
above, we ought to examine ourselves, whether  
heaven, or the world is more the object of our  
desires. When the mercies of the gospel are  
recited, they should raise our joy, our love,  
and thankfulness: and when we read the de-  
nunciations of God’s wrath against sin, our  
minds should receive with reverence the awful

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impression. When the good actions of holy men are recorded, we should consider them as recorded for our example; and when their frailties are recited, these should teach us diffidence, and humility. In short, our fears, our hopes, our faith, our joy, our love, and gratitude have all sufficient objects to engage them. It should be our great endeavour to transfuse the spirit of this holy book into our lives; and he who can do this the best, may be assured, that he honours it the most.

The last part of our duty to God is, “to serve him truly all the days of our life.”

“To serve God truly all the days of our life” implies two things: first, the mode of this service; and secondly, the term of it.

First, we must serve God truly. We must not rest satisfied with the outward action: but must take care that every action be founded on a proper motive. It is the motive alone that makes an action acceptable to God. The hypocrite “may fast twice in the week, and give alms of all that he possesses:” nay he may fast the whole week, if he be able; and give all he has in alms; but if his fasts, and his alms are intended as matter of ostentation



tation only, neither the one, nor the other, is that true service which God requires. God requires the heart: He requires that an earnest desire of acting agreeably to his will, should be the general spring of our actions: and this will give even an indifferent action a value in his sight.

As we are enjoined to serve God truly, so are we enjoined to serve him "all the days of our life." As far as human frailties will permit, we should persevere in a constant tenor of obedience. That lax behaviour, which instead of making a steady progress, is continually relapsing into former errors, and running the same round of sinning, and repenting, is rather the life of an irresolute sinner, than of a pious christian. Human errors, and frailties, we know, God will not treat with too severe an eye: but he who, in the general tenor of his life, does not keep advancing towards christian perfection; but suffers himself, at intervals, entirely to lose sight of his calling, cannot be really serious in his profession: he is at a great distance from serving God truly all the days of his life; and has no scriptural ground to hope much from the mercy of God.

That man, whether placed in high estate, or low, has reached the summit of human happiness, who is truly serious in the service of his Creator. The things of this world may engage, but cannot engross, his attention: its sorrows, and its joys may affect, but cannot disconcert, him. No man, he knows, can faithfully serve two masters. He hath hired himself to one—that great Master, whose commands he reveres, whose favour he seeks, whose displeasure alone is the real object of his fears; and whose rewards alone are the real objects of his hope. Every thing else is, trivial in his sight. The world may soothe; or it may threaten him: he perseveres steadily in the service of his God; and in that perseverance feels his happiness every day the more established.

## LECTURE XIII.

Duties to man divided into general and particular—general duties considered—loving our neighbour as ourselves—the phrase explained—the nature of christian benevolence—of private friendship, and love to our country—doing to others, as we would have them do to us—the rule properly guarded—the happiness derived to individuals, and society from the observance of the two rules, of loving our neighbour as ourselves; and doing to others, as we would have them do to us.

## LECTURE XIII.

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**H**AVING considered those duties, which we owe immediately to God, we next consider those, which have a more immediate connection with man. These, as disposed in the summary before us, may be divided into general, and particular duties—such as concern mankind in general; and such as arise from particular relations.

Let us consider, first, such as are general. “We must love our neighbour as ourselves”—and, “Do to others, as we would have them do to us.” These two rules may not improperly be called an appendix to the law. Upon every emergence a law in point may not be ready: it may not indeed exist. In many cases we must be more at liberty. What law, for instance, can direct all those little nameless offices of friendly intercourse between man and man, which preserve the peace of society; and form the greatest part of its happiness? What law again can direct our gratitude? or can enter into all those minute distinctions, which make the circumstances of one man different from those of another? We are here therefore enjoined to make appeals to our own



feelings in many cases not taken notice of by law.—The former of these great rules regards our affections; the latter, our actions.

First, “we must love our neighbour as ourselves.” The meaning of the word neighbour, our Saviour settled in the parable of the good Samaritan; from which it appears, that all mankind are to be esteemed our neighbours.

The mode also of this affection is defined. “We must love our neighbour, as ourselves.” How then do we love ourselves? Self-love, we know, is a steady principle, prompting us, at all times, to avoid pain, and pursue happiness. For though men are often the voluntary authors of their own misery; yet they act under a blind belief, that the present pleasure, in a vicious action, may overbalance the pernicious consequences. Their own happiness is always intended.—If therefore the love we owe our neighbour, must be measured by the love we bear ourselves, it must be a steady principle prompting us at all times to relieve his distresses, and promote his happiness.

But it may be objected, that love is involuntary—that we like, and dislike from humour, prejudice, and caprice: how then is an  
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affection, so little in our power, prescribed as a duty?

This is easily answered. A general, abstracted benevolence, which is ready to do good to all, and which delights in the good of all, may exist without any of that particular attachment to the individual, which is usually called love: and this is the temper, which christianity would encourage—an affection to the whole species; and particularly a compassion to the distressed part of it. The good Samaritan would have relieved any man in the same circumstances, in which he found the distressed traveller. To that man he had no particular attachment. He had never before seen him.

Here a question may arise about private friendship, and love to our country; on both which points the scripture is silent.

It may be so: it was our Saviour's design to enlarge our affections, rather than contract them. He, who was so well acquainted with human nature, certainly knew, that if universal benevolence were attained, all the inferior degrees of affection to relations, friends, and country, would follow of course.

Besides,

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Besides, religion seems to have no more business to recommend friendship, or patriotism, than it has to recommend marriage, or celibacy; a country-life, or a town-life. They are modes of affection, which circumstances may make suitable to one man, and unsuitable to another; and therefore cannot be of general moral obligation. One may conceive a man to change his abode so frequently, and so remotely, as to have neither country, nor friend.

The regulation of our affections leads naturally to the regulation of our actions. "We must do to others, as we would have them do to us."

Are we then to be the dupes of any extravagant claim, that may be made upon us?

By no means. This is a perversion of the rule. We are required only to do to others, what we could reasonably expect they should do to us. Hence all unreasonable claims are excluded. With this restriction the rule before us is truly admirable; and should be ever in our minds, when we have intercourse with others. Scarce any case can occur, in which it will not direct us right. Our practice is not here confounded by nice distinctions, or subtil points  
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of morality : we are referred at once to our own breasts. Our own feelings are the criterion. We have only to ask ourselves, whether the action in dispute be such, as we should think might reasonably be done to ourselves ? An answer to this question will solve the most difficult case between us, and our neighbour. And indeed if we attend sufficiently to this rule, we shall scarce need any other.

From the exertion of universal benevolence, inculcated in these two rules, every happiness must arise, of which men are capable, either as individuals, or as members of society. The first, which regulates our affections, leads directly to our own happiness. If we love others, as we love ourselves, we must of course divest our minds of all those vile affections, which are the great sources of our misery : and when envy, malice, revenge, and other bad inclinations are rooted out, the kind and friendly affections, will of course take place : at least, the ground is well prepared for their reception.

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As the observance of the first rule leads directly to our own happiness; the observance of the second leads directly to the happiness of others. The mischiefs, which distress society, arise chiefly from violence and fraud. Both these will be driven out, through the prevalence of this principle; for who would himself wish to be the object of either?

The signs which accompany this divine temper, are a general obliging behaviour in our ordinary conversation; and a gentleness of manners to all men, whether they are superiors, equals, or inferiors: a generous candour towards their faults; and a readiness to bear with their little infirmities, prejudices, and humours. All this will be the natural overflowings of a benevolent heart. And though we do not say, that whoever possesses an obliging civility of manners, must, of course, also have a benevolent heart (for an obliging behaviour is sometimes natural, and sometimes assumed); yet it may not be improper for those, who wish to attain this great principle, to begin with a gentleness of behaviour; as an excellent mean to soften the heart, and render it suscep-

susceptible of benign impressions. Such a behaviour may, perhaps, be more assisstant to us, in attaining the principle itself, than at sight appears.

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## LECTURE XIV.

Duties owing to particular persons—duty of children to parents—respect and obedience—in what the former consists—in what the latter—succouring a parent—brotherly affection—obedience to law—founded on the advantages of society.

FROM



## LECTURE XIV.

Duties owing to particular persons—duty of children to parents—respect and obedience—in what the former consists—in what the latter—involving a parent—brotherly affection—obedience to law—founded on the advantages of society.

FROM

**F**ROM the two grand principles of “loving  
 “our neighbour as ourselves; and of  
 “doing to others, as we would have them do  
 “to us,” which regulate our social intercourse  
 in general, we proceed to those more confined  
 duties, which arise from particular relations,  
 connections, and stations in life.

Among these, we are first taught, as indeed  
 the order of nature directs, to consider the great  
 duty of children to parents.

The two points to be insisted on, are respect  
 and obedience. Both these should naturally  
 spring from love; to which parents have the  
 highest claim. And indeed parents, in general,  
 behave to their children, in a manner both  
 to deserve and to obtain their love.

But if the kindness of the parent be not such  
 as to work on the affections of the child, yet  
 still the parent has a title to respect and obedience,  
 on the principle of duty; a principle,  
 which the voice of nature dictates; which  
 reason inculcates; which human laws, and  
 human customs all join to enforce; and which  
 the word of God strictly commands.

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The child will shew respect to his parent, by treating him, at all times with deference. He will consult his parent's inclination ; and shew a readiness in a thousand nameless trifles, to conform himself to it. He will never peevishly contradict his parent ; and when he offers a contrary opinion, he will offer it modestly. Respect will teach him also, not only to put the best colouring upon the infirmities of his parent ; but even if those infirmities be great, it will soften and screen them, as much as possible, from the public eye.

Obedience goes a step further, and supposes a positive command. In things unlawful indeed, the parental authority cannot bind : but this case rarely happens. The great danger is on the other side, that children, through obstinacy, or sullenness, should refuse their parents lawful commands ; to the observance of all which, however inconvenient to themselves, they are tied by various motives ; and above all, by the command of God ; who in his sacred denunciations against sin, ranks disobedience to parents among the worst\*.

\* Rom. i. 30.

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They are farther bound, not only to obey the commands of their parents; but to obey them chearfully. He does but half his duty, who does it not from his heart.

There remains still a third part of filial duty, which peculiarly belongs to children, when grown up. This the catechism calls succouring, or administering to the necessities of the parent; either in the way of managing his affairs, when he is less able to manage them himself; or in supplying his wants, should he need assistance in that way. And this the child should do, on the united principles of love, duty, and gratitude. The hypocritical Jew would sometimes evade this duty, by dedicating to sacred uses, what should have been expended in assisting his parent. Our Saviour sharply rebukes this perversion of duty; and gives him to understand, that no pretence of serving God, can cover the neglect of assisting a parent. And if no pretence of serving God can do it, surely every other pretence must be still more unnatural.

Under this head also we may consider that attention, and love, which are due to other relations; especially that mutual affection, which

should subsist between brothers. The name of brother expresses the highest degree of tenderness; and is generally used in scripture, as a term of peculiar endearment, to call men to the practice of social virtue. It reminds them of every kindness, which man can shew to man. If then, we ought to treat all mankind with the affection of brothers, in what light must they appear, who being really such, are ever at variance with each other; continually doing spiteful actions, and shewing upon every occasion, not only a want of brotherly kindness; but even of common regard?

The next part of our duty, is “to honour  
“and obey the king, and all that are put in  
“authority under him.”

By the “king, and all that are put in authority under him,” are meant the various parts of the government we live under, of which the king is the head: and the meaning of the precept is, that we ought to live in dutiful submission to the laws of our country.

Society, and government are united. We cannot have one without the other; and we submit to the inconveniences, for the sake of the advantages.

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The end of society is mutual safety and convenience. Without it, even safety could in no degree be obtained : the good would become a prey to the bad : nay the very human species to the beasts of the field.

Still less could we obtain the conveniences of life ; which cannot be had without the labour of many. If every man depended upon himself for what he enjoyed, how destitute would be the situation of human affairs !

But even safety and convenience are not the only fruits of society. Man, living merely by himself, would be an ignorant, unpolished savage. It is the intercourse of society, which cultivates the human mind. One man's knowledge, and experience is built upon another's ; and so the great edifice of science, and polished life, is reared.

To enjoy these advantages, therefore, men joined in society ; and hence it became necessary, that government should be established. Magistrates were created ; laws made ; taxes submitted to ; and every one, instead of righting himself (except in mere self-defence) is enjoined to appeal to the laws he lives under, as the best security of his life and property.



## LECTURE XV.

Duty to our teachers, and instructors—arising from the great importance of knowledge, and religion—and the great necessity of gaining habits of attention, and of virtue in our youth—analogy of youth and manhood to this world and the next.



**W**E are next enjoined “to submit ourselves to all our governors, teachers, spiritual pastors, and masters.” Here another species of government is pointed out. The laws of society are meant to govern our riper years: the instructions of our teachers, spiritual pastors, and masters are meant to guide our youth.

By our “teachers, spiritual pastors, and masters,” are meant all those, who have the care of our education, and of our instruction in religion; whom we are to obey, and listen to with humility, and attention, as the means of our advancement in knowledge, and religion. The instructions we receive from them, are unquestionably subject to our own judgment in future life; for by his own judgment every man must stand, or fall. But, during our youth, it is highly proper for us to pay a dutiful submission to their instructions, as we cannot yet be supposed to have formed any judgment of our own. At that early age, it should be our endeavour to acquire knowledge; and afterwards unprejudiced to form our opinions.

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The duty which young people owe to their instructors, cannot be shewn better, than in the effect, which the instructions they receive, have upon them. They would do well, therefore, to consider the advantages of an early attention to these two things, both of great importance, knowledge and religion.

The great use of knowledge in all its various branches (to which the learned languages are generally considered as an introduction) is to free the mind from the prejudices of ignorance; and to give it juster, and more enlarged conceptions, than are the mere growth of rude nature. By reading, you add the experience of others to your own. It is the improvement of the mind chiefly, that makes the difference between man and man; and gives one man, a real superiority over another.

Besides, the mind must be employed. The lower orders of men have their attention much engrossed by those employments, in which the necessities of life engage them: and it is happy that they have. Labour stands in the room of education; and fills up those vacancies of mind, which in a state of idleness would be engrossed by vice. And if they, who have  
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more leisure, do not substitute something in the room of this, their minds also will become the prey of vice ; and the more so, as they have the means to indulge it more in their power. A vacant mind is exactly that house mentioned in the gospel, which the devil found empty. In he entered ; and taking with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, they took possession. It is an undoubted truth, that one vice indulged, introduces others ; and that each succeeding vice becomes more depraved.— If then the mind must be employed, what can fill up its vacuities more rationally than the acquisition of knowledge ? Let us therefore thank God for the opportunities he hath afforded us ; and not turn into a curse those means of leisure, which might become so great a blessing.

But however necessary to us knowledge may be, religion, we know, is infinitely more so. The one adorns a man, and gives him, it is true, superiority, and rank in life : but the other is absolutely essential to his happiness.

In the midst of youth, health, and abundance, the world is apt to appear a very gay, and pleasing scene ; it engages our desires ; and  
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in a degree satisfies them also. But it is wisdom to consider, that a time will come, when youth, health, and fortune will all fail us ; and if disappointment, and vexation do not sour our taste for pleasure, at least sickness and infirmities will destroy it. In these gloomy seasons, and above all, at the approach of death, what will become of us without religion ? When this world fails, where shall we fly, if we expect no refuge in another ? Without holy hope in God, and resignation to his will, and trust in him for deliverance, what is there that can secure us against the evils of life ?

The great utility therefore of knowledge and religion being thus apparent, it is highly incumbent upon us to pay a studious attention to them in our youth. If we do not, it is more than probable, that we shall never do it ; that we shall grow old in ignorance, by neglecting the one ; and old in vice, by neglecting the other.

For improvement in knowledge, youth is certainly the fittest season. The mind is then ready to receive any impression. It is free from all that care, and attention, which, in riper age, the affairs of life bring with them.

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The memory too is then stronger; and better able to acquire the rudiments of knowledge; and as the mind is then void of ideas, it is more suited to those parts of learning, which are conversant in words. Besides, there is sometimes in youth a modesty, and ductility, which in advanced years (if those years especially have been left a prey to ignorance), become self-sufficiency, and prejudice; and these effectually bar up all the inlets to knowledge.—But, above all, unless habits of attention, and application are early gained, we shall scarce acquire them afterwards.—The inconsiderate youth seldom reflects upon this; nor knows his loss, till he know also, that it cannot be retrieved.

Nor is youth more the season to acquire knowledge, than to form religious habits. It is a great point to get habit on the side of virtue. It will make every thing smooth, and easy. The earliest principles are generally the most lasting; and those of a religious cast are seldom wholly lost. Though the temptations of the world may, now and then, draw the well-principled youth aside; yet his principles being continually at war with his practice,  
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there is hope, that in the end the better part may overcome the worse, and bring on a reformation. Whereas he, who has suffered habits of vice to get possession of his youth, has little chance of being brought back to a sense of religion. In a common course of things it can rarely happen. Some calamity must rouse him. He must be awakened by a storm, or sleep for ever.—How much better is it then to make that easy to us, which we know is best? And to form those habits now, which hereafter we shall wish we had formed?

There are, who would restrain youth from imbibing any religious principles, till they can judge for themselves; lest they should imbibe prejudice for truth. But why should not the same caution be used in science also; and the minds of youth left void of all impressions? The experiment, I fear, in both cases would be dangerous. If the mind were left uncultivated during so long a period, though nothing else should find entrance, vice certainly would: and it would make the larger shoots, as the soil would be vacant. A boy had better receive knowledge and religion mixed with error, than none at all. For when the mind is set a thinking,



ing, it may deposit its prejudices by degrees, and refine itself at last : but in a state of stagnation it will infallibly become foul.

To conclude, our youth bears the same proportion to our more advanced life, as this world does to the next. In this life we must form, and cultivate those habits of virtue, which must qualify us for a better state. If we neglect them here, and contract habits of an opposite kind, instead of gaining that exalted state, which is promised to our improvement, we shall of course sink into that state, which is adapted to the habits we have formed.

Exactly thus is youth introductory to manhood ; to which it is properly speaking a state of preparation. During this season we must qualify ourselves for the parts we are to act hereafter. In manhood we bear the fruit, which has in youth been planted. If we have fauntered away our youth, we must expect to be ignorant men. If indolence and inattention have taken an early possession of us, they will probably increase, as we advance in life ; and make us a burden to ourselves, and useless to society. If again, we suffer ourselves to be misled by vicious inclinations, they will daily  
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get new strength, and end in dissolute lives. But if we cultivate our minds in our youth, attain habits of attention and industry, of virtue, and sobriety, we shall find ourselves well prepared to act our future parts in life; and, what above all things ought to be our care, by gaining this command over ourselves, we shall be more able, as we get forward in the world, to resist every new temptation, as it arises.

## LECTURE XVI.

Behaviour to superiors—the word better explained—probable reasons for God's appointing various distinctions among men—happiness and misery not connected with station.

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# LECTURE XVI

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**W**E are next enjoined "to order ourselves  
"lowly and reverently, to all our  
"betters."

By our betters are meant they who are in a superior station of life to our own; and by "ordering ourselves lowly and reverently towards them," is meant paying them that respect, which is due to their station.

The word betters indeed includes two kinds of persons, to whom our respect is due—those, who have a natural claim to it; and those who have an acquired one; that is, a claim arising from some particular situation in life.

Among the first, are all our superior relations; not only parents; but all other relations, who are in a line above us. All these have a natural claim to our respect.—There is a respect also due from youth to age; which is always becoming; and tends to keep youth within the bounds of modesty.

To others, respect is due from those particular stations, which arise from society and government. "Fear God," says the text; and it adds, "honour the king."



It is due also from many other situations in life. Employments, honours, and even wealth will exact it; and all may justly exact it, in a proper degree.

But it may here perhaps be inquired, why God should permit this latter distinction among men? That some should have more authority than others, we can easily see, is absolutely necessary in government; but among men, who are all born equal, why should the goods of life be distributed in so unequal a proportion?

To this inquiry, it may be answered, that, in the first place, we see nothing in this, but what is common in all the works of God. A gradation is every where observable. Beauty, strength, swiftness, and other qualities, are varied through the creation in numberless degrees. In the same manner likewise are varied the gifts of fortune, as they are called. Why therefore should one man's being richer than another, surprize us more than his being stronger than another, or more prudent?

Though we can but very inadequately trace the wisdom of God in his works, yet very wise reasons appear for this variety in the gifts of fortune.

fortune. It seems necessary both in a civil, and in a moral light.

In a civil light, it is the necessary accompaniment of various employments; on which depend all the advantages of society. Like the stones of a regular building, some must range higher, and some lower; some must support, and others be supported; some will form the strength of the building, and others its ornament; but all unite in producing one regular, and proportioned whole. If then different employments are necessary, of course different degrees of wealth, honour, and consequence must follow; a variety of distinctions, and obligations; in short, different ranks, and a subordination must take place.

Again in a moral light, the disproportion of wealth, and other worldly adjuncts gives a range to the more extensive exercise of virtue. Some virtues could but faintly exist upon the plan of an equality. If some did not abound, there were little room for temperance: if some did not suffer need, there were as little for patience. Other virtues again could hardly exist at all. Who could practise generosity, where there was no object of it? Who, hu-

mility, where all ambitious desires were excluded ?

Since then Providence, in scattering these various gifts, proposes ultimately the good of man, it is our duty to acquiesce in this order, and “to behave ourselves lowly, and reverently” (not with servility, but with a decent respect) “to all our superiors.”

Before I conclude this subject, it may be proper to observe, in vindication of the ways of Providence, that we are not to suppose happiness and misery necessarily connected with riches and poverty. Each condition hath its particular sources both of pleasure and pain, unknown to the other. Those in elevated stations have a thousand latent pangs, of which their inferiors have no idea: while their inferiors again have as many pleasures, which the others cannot taste. I speak only of such modes of happiness or misery as arise immediately from different stations. Of misery, indeed, from a variety of other causes, all men of every station are equal heirs; either when God lays his hand upon us in sickness, or misfortune; or when, by our own follies and vices, we become the ministers of our own distress.

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Who then would build his happiness upon an elevated station? Or who would envy the possession of such happiness in another? We know not with what various distresses that station, which is the object of our envy, may be attended.—Besides, as we are accountable for all we possess, it may be happy for us, that we possess so little. The means of happiness, as far as station can procure them, are commonly in our own power, if we are not wanting to ourselves.

Let each of us then do his duty in that station which Providence has assigned him; ever remembering, that the next world will soon destroy all earthly distinctions.—One distinction only will remain among the sons of men at that time—the distinction between good and bad; and this distinction it is worth all our pains and all our ambition to acquire.

What then would build his happiness upon  
an elevated station? Or who would envy the  
position which happened in accident? We  
know not what we have as difficulties that in-  
volve, which is the object of our envy, may be  
overcome.—But what we are responsible for  
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## LECTURE XVII.

The injury of words—evil-speaking—lying—  
an equivocation—breach of promise—sland-  
ering.

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## LECTURE XVII.

The history of words—evil-speaking—living—  
an evocation—birth of evils—how—  
during.

WE are next instructed “to hurt nobody  
 “by word, or deed—to be true and  
 “just in all our dealings—to bear no malice  
 “nor hatred in our hearts—to keep our hands  
 “from picking and stealing—our tongues from  
 “evil-speaking, lying, and slandering.”

The duties comprehended in these words are a little transposed. What should class under one head is brought under another. “To hurt nobody by word, or deed,” is the general proposition. The under parts should follow: First, “to keep the tongue from evil-speaking, lying, and slandering;” which is, “to hurt nobody by word.” Secondly, “to be true and just in all our dealings;” and “to keep our hands from picking and stealing;” which is, “to hurt nobody by deed.” As to the injunction, “to bear no malice nor hatred in our hearts,” it belongs properly to neither of these heads; but is a distinct one by itself. The duties being thus separated, I shall proceed to explain them.

And, first, of injuring our neighbour by our “words.” This may be done, we find, in  
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three ways ; by “ evil-speaking, by lying, and “ by flandering.”

By “ evil-speaking ” is meant speaking ill of our neighbour ; but on a supposition, that this ill is the truth. In some circumstances it is certainly right to speak ill of our neighbour ; as when we are called on in a court of justice to give our evidence ; or, when we can set any one right in his opinion of a person, in in whom he is about to put an improper confidence. Nor can there be any harm in speaking of a bad action, which has been determined in a court of justice, or is otherwise become notorious.

But, on the other hand, it is highly disallowable to speak wantonly of the characters of others from common fame ; because, in a thousand instances, we find that stories, which have no better foundation, are misrepresented. They are perhaps only half-told—they have been heard through the medium of malice, or envy—some favourable circumstance hath been omitted—some foreign circumstance hath been added—some trifling circumstance hath been exaggerated—the motive, the provocation, or perhaps the reparation, hath been concealed—in short,  
the

the representation of the fact is, some way or other, totally different from the fact itself.

But even, when we have the best evidence of a bad action, with all its circumstances before us, we surely indulge a very ill-natured pleasure in spreading the shame of an offending brother. We can do no good; and we may do harm: we may weaken his good resolutions by exposing him: we may harden him against the world. Perhaps it may be his first bad action. Perhaps nobody is privy to it but ourselves. Let us give him at least one trial. Let us not cast the first stone. Which of our lives could stand so strict a scrutiny? He only who is without sin himself can have an excuse for treating his brother with severity. At the same time, he would be the last person, that would do it.

Let us next consider "lying;" which is an intention to deceive by falsehood in our words.—To warn us against lying, we should do well to consider the folly—the meanness—and the wickedness of it.

The folly of lying consists in its defeating its own purpose. A habit of lying is generally in the end detected; and, after a detection, the  
liar,



liar, instead of deceiving, will not even be believed, when he happens to speak the truth. Nay, every single lye is attended with such a variety of circumstances, which lead to a detection, that it is often discovered. The use generally made of a lye is to cover a fault; but as the end is seldom answered, we only aggravate what we wish to conceal. In point even of prudence, an honest confession would serve us better.

The meanness of lying arises from the cowardice which it implies. We dare not boldly and nobly speak the truth; but have recourse to low subterfuges, which always argue a sordid, and disingenuous mind. Hence it is, that in the fashionable world, the word liar is always considered as a term of peculiar reproach.

The wickedness of lying consists in its perverting one of the greatest blessings of God, the use of speech. Truth is the great bond of society. Falsehood, of course, tends to its dissolution. If one man may lye, why not another? And if there is no mutual trust among men, there is an end of all intercourse and dealing.

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An equivocation is nearly related to a lye. It is an intention to deceive under words of a double meaning; or words, which, literally speaking, are true; and is equally criminal with a downright breach of truth. When St. Peter asked Sapphira (in the 5th chapter of the Acts) "whether her husband had sold the land for so much?" She answered, he had: and literally she spoke the truth: for he had sold it for that sum, included in a larger. But having an intention to deceive, we find the apostle considered the equivocation as a lye.

In short, it is the intention to deceive, which is criminal: the mode of deception, like the vehicle in which poison is conveyed, is of no consequence. A nod, or sign, may convey a lye as effectually, as the most deceitful language.

Under the head of lying may be mentioned a breach of promise. While a resolution remains in our own breasts, it is subject to our own review: but when we make another person a party with us, an engagement is made; and every engagement, though only of the lightest kind, should be punctually observed. A solemn promise is of the strictest kind; and he who does not think himself bound by such an obligation,

gation, has no pretensions to the character of an honest man. A breach of promise is still worse than a lye. A lye is, simply a breach of truth : but a breach of promise, is a breach both of truth and trust.

Forgetfulness is a weak excuse. It only shews how little we are affected by so solemn an engagement. Should we forget to call for a sum of money, of which we were in want, at an appointed time ? Or do we think a solemn promise of less value, than a sum of money ?

Having considered evil-speaking and lying, let us next consider "slandering." By "slandering" we mean, injuring our neighbour's character by falsehood. Here we still rise higher in the scale of injurious words. Slandering our neighbour is the greatest injury, which words can do him ; and is, therefore, worse than either evil-speaking, or lying. The mischief of this sin depends on the value of our characters. All men, unless they be past feeling, desire naturally to be thought well of by their fellow-creatures ; a good character is one of the principal means of being serviceable either to ourselves, or others ; and among numbers, the very bread they eat, depends upon it. What aggravated injury,

injury, therefore, do we bring upon every man, whose name we slander? And, what is still worse, the injury is irreparable. If you defraud a man; restore what you took, and the injury is repaired. But, if you slander him, it is not in your power to shut up all the ears, and all the mouths, to which your tale may have access. The evil spreads, like the winged seeds of some noxious plants, which scatter mischief on a breath of air, and disperse it on every side, and beyond prevention.

It may just be added, that a slander may be spread, as a lye may be told, in various ways. We may do it by an insinuation, as well as in a direct manner: we may spread it in a secret; or propagate it under the colour of friendship.

I may add also, that it is a species of slander, and often a very malignant one, to lessen the merits, or exaggerate the failings of others; as it is likewise to omit defending a misrepresented character; or to let others bear the blame of our offences.





## LECTURE XVIII.

Injurious actions—law and justice different things—illustrated by several instances—malice and hatred arising from the resentment of injuries—arising from envy.

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HAVING thus considered injurious words, let us next consider injurious actions. On this head we are enjoined “to keep our hands from picking and stealing; and to be true and just in all our dealings.”

As to theft, it is a crime of so odious, and vile a nature, that one would imagine no person, who hath had the least tincture of a virtuous education, even though driven to necessity, could be led into it.—I shall not, therefore, enter into a dissuasive from this crime; but go on with the explanation of the other part of the injunction, and see what it is to be true and just in all our dealings.

Justice is even still more, if possible, the support of society, than truth: inasmuch as a man may be more injurious by his actions, than by his words. It is for this reason, that the whole force of human law is bent to restrain injustice; and the happiness of every society will increase, in proportion to this restraint.

We very much err, however, if we suppose, that every thing within the bounds of law is justice. The law was intended only for bad

men; and it is impossible to make the meshes of it so strait, but that many very great enormities will escape. The well-meaning man, therefore, knowing, that the law was not made for him, consults a better guide—his own conscience, informed by religion. And, indeed, the great difference between the good and the bad man consists in this: the good man will do nothing, but what his conscience will allow: the bad man will do any thing, which the law cannot reach.

It would, indeed, be endless to describe the various ways, in which a man may be dishonest within the limits of law. They are as various, as our intercourse with mankind. Some of the most obvious of them I shall cursorily mention.

In matters of commerce, the knave has many opportunities. The different qualities of the same commodity—the different modes of adulteration—the specious arts of vending—the frequent ignorance in purchasing; and a variety of other circumstances, open an endless field to the ingenuity of fraud. The honest fair-dealer, in the mean time, has only one rule, which is, that all arts, however common  
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In business, which are intended to deceive, are utterly unlawful. It may be added, upon this head, that if any one, conscious of having been a transgressor, is desirous of repairing his fault, restitution is by all means necessary: till that be done, he continues in a course of injustice.

Again, in matters of contract, a man has many opportunities of being dishonest within the bounds of law. He may be strict in observing the letter of an agreement, when the equitable meaning requires a laxer interpretation: or, he can take the laxer interpretation, when it serves his purpose; and at the loop-hole of some ambiguous expression, exclude the literal meaning, though it be undoubtedly the true one.

The same iniquity appears in withholding from another his just right; or in putting him to expence, in recovering it. The movements of the law are slow; and in many cases cannot be otherwise: but he who takes the advantage of this to injure his neighbour, proves himself an undoubted knave.

It is a species of the same kind of injustice to withhold a debt, when we have ability to pay; or to run into debt, when we have not that ability. The former can proceed only from a



bad disposition : the latter, from suffering our desires to exceed our station. Some are excused, on this head, as men of generous principles, which they cannot confine. But what is their generosity? They assist one man by injuring another. And what good arises to society from hence? Such persons cannot act on principle; and we need not hesitate to rank them with those, who run into debt to gratify their own selfish inclinations. One man desires the elegancies of life; another desires what he thinks an equal good, the reputation of generosity.

Oppression is another species of injustice; by which, in a thousand ways, under the cover of law, we may take the advantage of the superiority of our power, either to crush an inferior, or humble him to our designs.

Ingratitude is another. A loan, we know, claims a legal return. And is the obligation less, if, instead of a loan, you receive a kindness? The law, indeed, says nothing on this point of immorality; but an honest conscience will be very loud in the condemnation of it.

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We may be unjust also in our resentment; by carrying it beyond what reason and religion prescribe.

But it would be endless to describe the various ways, in which injustice discovers itself. In truth, almost every omission of duty may be resolved into injustice.

The next precept is, "to bear no malice, nor hatred in our hearts."

The malice and hatred of our hearts arise, in the first place, from injurious treatment; and surely no man, when he is injured, can at first help feeling that he is so. But christianity requires, that we should subdue these feelings, as soon as possible; "and not suffer the sun to go down upon our wrath." Various are the passages of scripture, which inculcate the forgiveness of injuries. Indeed, no point is more laboured than this; and with reason, because no temper is more productive of evil, both to ourselves and others, than a malicious one. The sensations of a mind burning with revenge, are beyond description: and as we are at these seasons very unable to judge coolly;  
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and of course, liable to carry our resentment too far, the consequence is, that, in our rage, we may do a thousand things, which can never be atoned for ; and of which we may repent as long as we live.

Besides, one act draws on another ; and retaliation keeps the quarrel alive. The gospel, therefore, ever gracious, and kind to man, in all its precepts, enjoins us to check all these violent emotions ; and to leave our cause in the hands of God. “ Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord :” and he, who, in opposition to this precept, takes vengeance into his own hands, and cherishes the malice and hatred of his heart, may assure himself, that he has not yet learned to be a christian. These precepts, perhaps, may not entirely agree with modern principles of honour : but let the man of honour see to that. The maxims of the world cannot change the truth of the gospel.

Nay, even in recovering our just right, or in pursuing a criminal to justice, we should take care, that it be not done in the spirit of retaliation and revenge. If these be our motives,

tives, though we make the law our instrument, we are equally guilty.

But besides injurious treatment, the malice and hatred of our hearts have often another source, and that is envy: and thus in the litaney, "envy, malice, and hatred," are all joined together with great propriety. The emotions of envy are generally cooler, and less violent, than those which arise from the resentment of injury; so that envy is seldom so mischievous in its effects as revenge: but with regard to ourselves, it is altogether as bad, and full as destructive of the spirit of christianity. What is the religion of that man, who instead of thanking Heaven for the blessings he receives, is fretting himself continually with a disagreeable comparison between himself and some other? He cannot enjoy what he has, because another has more wealth, a fairer fame, or perhaps more merit than himself. He is miserable, because others are happy.

But to omit the wickedness of envy, how absurd and foolish is it, in a world where  
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we must necessarily expect much real misery, to be perniciously inventive in producing it?

Besides, what ignorance! We see only the glaring outside of things. Under all that envied glare, many unseen distresses may lurk, from which our station may be free: for our merciful Creator seems to have bestowed happiness, as far as station is concerned, with great equality among all his creatures.

In conclusion, therefore, let it be the great object of our attention, and the subject of our prayers, to rid our minds of all this cursed intrusion of evil thoughts—whether they proceed from malice, or from envy. Let all our malicious thoughts soften into charity and benevolence; and let us “forgive one another, as God, for Christ’s sake, has forgiven us.” As for our envious thoughts, as far as they relate to externals, let them subside in humility, acquiescence, and submission to the will of God. And when we are tempted to envy the good qualities of others, let us spurn so base a conception, and  
change



change it into a generous emulation—into an endeavour to raise ourselves to an equality with our rival, and not to depress him to a level with us.

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## LECTURE XIX.

Duties owing to ourselves—temperance—sobriety—chastity—rules for preserving the purity of our thoughts, words, and actions.

THUS

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Duties owing to ourselves—temperance—  
chastity—rules for preserving the  
purity of our thoughts, words, and actions

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**T**HUS far the duties we have considered, come most properly under the head of those which we owe to our neighbour; what follows, relates rather to ourselves. On this head, we are instructed “to keep our bodies in “temperance, soberness, and chastity.”

Though our souls should be our great concern, yet, as they are nearly connected with our bodies, and as the impurity of the one contaminates the other, a great degree of moral attention is, of course, due to our bodies also.

As our first station is in this world, to which our bodies particularly belong, they are formed with such appetites, as are requisite to our commodious living in it; and the rule given us is, “to use the world so as not to abuse “it.” St. Paul, by a beautiful allusion, calls our bodies the “temples of the Holy Ghost:” by which he means to impress us with a strong idea of their dignity; and to deter us from debasing by low pleasures, what should be the seat of so much purity. To youth these cautions are above measure necessary, because their passions and appetites are strong; their reason

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and judgement weak. They are prone to pleasure, and void of reflection. How, therefore, these young adventurers in life may best steer their course, and use this sinful world so as not to abuse it, is a consideration well worth their attention. Let us then see under what regulations their appetites should be restrained.

By "keeping our bodies in temperance" is meant avoiding excess in eating, with regard both to the quantity and quality of our food. We should neither eat more than our stomachs can well bear; nor be nice and delicate in our eating.

To preserve the body in health is the end of eating; and they who regulate themselves merely by this end, who eat without choice or distinction, paying no regard to the pleasure of eating, observe perhaps the best rule of temperance. They go rather indeed beyond temperance, and may be called abstemious. A man may be temperate, and yet allow himself a little more indulgence. Great care, however, is here necessary; and the more, as perhaps no precise rule can be affixed, after we have passed the first great limit, and let the palate loose  
among

among variety\*. Our own discretion must be our guide, which should be constantly kept awake by considering the many bad consequences, which attend a breach of temperance.—Young men, in the full vigour of health, do not consider these things; but as age comes on, and different maladies begin to appear, they may perhaps repent, they did not, at an earlier period, observe the rules of temperance.

In a moral and religious light, the consequences of intemperance are still worse. To enjoy a comfortable meal, when it comes before us, is allowable: but he who suffers his mind to dwell upon the pleasures of eating, and makes them the employment of his thoughts, has at least opened one source of mental corruption†.

\* ————— *Nam variae res,  
Ut noceant homini, credas memor illius escae,  
Quæ simplex olim tibi federit. At simul assis  
Miscueris elixa, simul conchyliâ turdis  
Dulcia se in bilem vertent, stomachoq. tumultum  
Lenta foret pîuita.* ————— *Hor.*

† ————— *Corpus onustum  
Hæsternis vitiis, animum quoq. prægravat una,  
Atq. affigit humo divinæ particulam auræ.* *Hor. Sat.*

After all, he who would most perfectly enjoy the pleasures of the table, such as they are, must look for them within the bounds of temperance. The palate accustomed to satiety hath lost its tone; and the greatest sensualists have been brought to confess, that the coarsest fare, with an appetite kept in order by temperance, affords a more delicious repast, than the most luxurious meal without it.

As temperance relates chiefly to eating, sobriety relates properly to drinking. And here the same observations recur. The strictest, and perhaps the best rule, is merely to satisfy the end of drinking. But if a little more indulgence be taken, it ought to be taken with the greatest circumspection.

With regard to youth indeed, I should be inclined to great strictness on this head. In eating, if they eat of proper and simple food, they cannot easily err. Their growing limbs, and strong exercise, require larger supplies than full-grown bodies, which must be kept in order by a more rigid temperance. But if more indulgence be allowed them in eating, less, surely, should in drinking. With strong liquors of every kind they have nothing to do;  
and

and if they should totally abstain on this head, it were the better. The languor which attends age\*, requires perhaps, now and then, some aids; but the spirits of youth want no recruits: a little rest is sufficient.

As to the bad consequences derived from excessive drinking, besides filling the blood with bloated and vicious humours, and debauching the purity of the mind, as in the case of intemperate eating, it is attended with this peculiar evil, the loss of our senses. Hence follow frequent inconveniences and mortifications. We expose our follies—we betray our secrets—we are often imposed on—we quarrel with our friends—we lay ourselves open to our enemies; and, in short, make ourselves the objects of contempt, and the topics of ridicule to all our acquaintance.—Nor is it only the act of intoxication which deprives us of our reason during the prevalence of it; the habit of drunkenness soon besots and impairs the understanding, and

• ————— *Ubiue*  
*Accedant anni, et tractari mollius ætas*  
*Imbesilla volet.* —————

*Hor. Sat.*

renders us at all times less fit for the offices of life.

We are next enjoined “to keep our bodies “in chastity.” “Flee youthful lusts,” says the apostle, “which war against the soul.” And there is surely nothing which carries on a war against the soul more successfully. Wherever we have a catalogue in scripture (and we have many such catalogues) of those sins, which in a peculiar manner debauch the mind, these youthful lusts have always, under some denomination, a place among them.—To keep ourselves free from all contagion of this kind, let us endeavour to preserve a purity in our thoughts—our words—and our actions.

First, let us preserve a purity in our thoughts. These dark recesses, which the eye of the world cannot reach, are the receptacles of these youthful lusts. Here they find their first encouragement. The entrance of such impure ideas perhaps we cannot always prevent. We may always however prevent cherishing them: we may always prevent their making  
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an impression upon us : the devil may be cast out, as soon as discovered.

Let us always keep in mind, that even into these dark abodes the eye of Heaven can penetrate : that every thought of our hearts is open to that God, before whom we must one day stand ; and that however secretly we may indulge these impure ideas, at the great day of account, they will certainly appear in an awful detail against us.

Let us remember again, that if our bodies be the temples of the Holy Ghost, our minds are the very sanctuaries of those temples : and if there be any weight in the apostle's argument against polluting our bodies, it urges with double force against polluting our minds.

But above all other considerations, it behoves us most to keep our thoughts pure, because they are the fountains from which our words and actions flow. " Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Obscene words and actions are only bad thoughts matured ; and spring as naturally from them, as the plant from its seed. It is

the same vicious depravity, carried a step farther; and only shews a more confirmed, and a more mischievous degree of guilt. While we keep our impurities in our thoughts, they debauch only ourselves: bad enough, it is true. But when we proceed to words and actions, we let our impurities loose: we spread the contagion, and become the corrupters of others.

Let it be our first care, therefore, to keep our thoughts pure. If we do this, our words and actions will be pure of course. And that we may be the better enabled to do it, let us use such helps as reason and religion prescribe. Let us avoid all company, and all books, that have a tendency to corrupt our minds; and every thing that can inflame our passions. He who allows himself in these things, holds a parley with vice; which will infallibly debauch him in the end, if he do not take the alarm in time, and break off such dalliance.

One thing ought to be our particular care, and that is, never to be unemployed. Ingenious

genious amusements are of great use in filling up the vacuities of our time. Idle we should never be. A vacant mind is an invitation to vice.

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## LECTURE XX.

Covetousness the source of wickedness and misery—a desiring frame of mind—covetousness consistent with prodigality—particularly to be restrained in youth—duties of each station—an active, useful life recommended—the proper motive to such a life.

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LECTURE

Continued from page 10  
The first part of the lecture  
was devoted to a discussion  
of the history of the  
subject. The speaker  
traced the development  
of the subject from its  
origins to the present  
time. He pointed out  
the various stages  
through which the  
subject has passed, and  
the influence of the  
different schools of  
thought upon its  
development. He  
concluded by stating  
that the subject was  
still in its infancy,  
and that much more  
work was needed to  
bring it to a state  
of maturity.

The second part of the  
lecture was devoted to a  
discussion of the  
principles of the  
subject. The speaker  
explained the various  
principles which  
govern the subject,  
and showed how they  
were applied in the  
different stages of  
its development. He  
also pointed out the  
importance of these  
principles in the  
study of the subject,  
and the need for a  
thorough knowledge  
of them in order to  
understand the  
subject properly.

**W**E are forbidden, next, “to covet, or  
“desire other men’s goods.”

There are two great paths of vice, into which bad men commonly strike; that of unlawful pleasure, and that of unlawful gain.---The path of unlawful pleasure we have just examined; and have seen the danger of obeying the headstrong impulse of our appetites.---We have considered also an immoderate love of gain, and have seen dishonesty and fraud in a variety of shapes. But we have yet viewed them only as they affect society. We have viewed only the outward action. The rule before us, “We must not covet, nor desire “other men’s goods,” comes a step nearer home, and considers the motive which governs the action.

Covetousness, or the love of money, is called in scripture “the root of all evil:” and it is called so for two reasons; because it makes us wicked, and because it makes us miserable.

First, it makes us wicked. When it once gets possession of the heart, it will let no good principle flourish near it. Most vices have their fits; and when the violence of the passion is spent,

spent, there is some interval of calm. The vicious appetite cannot always run riot. It is fatigued at least by its own impetuosity : and it is possible, that in this moment of tranquillity, a whisper from virtue may be heard. But in avarice, there is rarely intermission. It hangs, like a dead weight, upon the soul, always pulling it to earth. We might as well expect to see a plant grow upon a flint, as a virtue in the heart of a miser.

It makes us miserable as well as wicked. The cares and the fears of avarice are proverbial ; and it must needs be that he, who depends for happiness on what is liable to a thousand accidents ; must of course feel as many distresses, and disappointments. The good man depends for happiness on something more permanent ; and if his worldly affairs go ill, his great dependance is still left\*. But as wealth is the only god which the covetous man worships (for “ covetousness,” we are told, “ is idolatry”), a disappointment here, is a disappointment indeed. Be he ever so prof-

\* *Sæviat, atq. novos moveat fortuna tumultus ;*  
*Quantum hinc imminuet ?* —————

*Hor. Sat.*

perous,

perous, his wealth cannot secure him against the evils of mortality; against that time, when he must give up all he values; when his bargains of advantage will be over, and nothing left but tears and despair.

But even a desiring frame of mind, though it be not carried to such a length, is always productive of misery. It cannot be otherwise. While we suffer ourselves to be continually in quest of what we have not, it is impossible that we should be happy with what we have. In a word, to abridge our wants as much as possible, not to increase them, is the truest happiness.

We are much mistaken, however, if we think the man who hoards up his money, is the only covetous man. The prodigal, though he differ in his end, may be as avaricious in his means\*. The former denies himself every comfort; the latter grasps at every pleasure. Both characters are equally bad in different extremes. The miser is more detestable in the eyes of the world, because he enters into none

\* *Alieni appetenti, sui profusus.*

*Sal. de Catil.*

of its joys ; but it is a question, which is more wretched in himself, or more pernicious to society.

As covetousness is esteemed the vice of age, every appearance of it among young persons ought particularly to be discouraged ; because, if it gets ground at this early period, nobody can tell how far it may not afterwards proceed. And yet, on the other side, there may be great danger of encouraging the opposite extreme. As it is certainly right, under proper restrictions, both to save our money, and to spend it, it would be highly useful to fix the due bounds on each side. But nothing is more difficult than to raise these nice limits between extremes. Every man's case, in a thousand circumstances, differs from his neighbour's : and as no rule can be fixed for all ; every man, of course, in these disquisitions, must be left to his own conscience. We are all indeed very ready to give our opinions how others ought to act. We can adjust with great nicety, what is proper for them to do ; and point out their mistakes with much precision : while nothing is necessary to us, but to act as properly as we can ourselves ; observing as just a mean  
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as possible between prodigality and avarice; and applying, in all our difficulties, to the word of God, where these great land-marks of morality are the most accurately fixed.

We have now taken a view of what is prohibited in our commerce with mankind: let us next see what is enjoined. (We are still proceeding with those duties, which we owe to ourselves). Instead of spending our fortune therefore in unlawful pleasure, or increasing it by unlawful gain; we are required "to learn, "and labour truly" (that is honestly) "to "get our own living, and to do our duty in "that state of life, unto which it shall please "God to call us."—These words will be sufficiently explained by considering, first, that we all have some station in life—some particular duties to discharge; and secondly, in what manner we ought to discharge them.

First, that man was not born to be idle, may be inferred from the active spirit, that appears in every part of nature. Every thing is alive; every thing contributes to the general good: even the very inanimate parts of the creation, plants, stones, metals, cannot be called totally inactive; but bear their part likewise in the

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general usefulness. If then every part, even of inanimate nature, be thus employed, surely we cannot suppose it was the intention of the great Creator, that man, who is the most capable of employing himself properly, should be the only creature without employment.

Again, that man was born for active life, is plain from the necessity of labour. If it had not been necessary, God would not originally have imposed it. But without it, the body would become enervated, and the mind corrupted. Idleness therefore is justly esteemed the origin, both of disease and vice. So that if labour, and employment, either of body, or mind, had no use, but what respected ourselves, they would be highly proper: but they have farther use.

The necessity of them is plain, from the want that all men have of the assistance of others. If so, this assistance should be mutual; every man should contribute his part. We have already seen, that it is proper, there should be different stations in the world,—that some should be placed high in life, and others low. The lowest, we know, cannot be exempt from labour; and the highest ought not:  
though

though their labour, according to their station, will be of a different kind. Some, we see, "must labour" (as the catechism phrases it) "to get their own living; and others should do their duty in that state of life, whatever that state is, unto which it hath pleased God to call them." All are assisted: all should assist. God distributes, we read, various talents among men; to some he gives ten talents, to others five, and to others one: but it is expected, we find, that notwithstanding this inequality, each should employ the talent that is given, to the best advantage: and he who received ten talents, was under the same obligation of improving them, as he who had received only one; and would, if he had hid his talents in the earth, have been punished, in proportion to the abuse. Every man, even in the highest station, may find a proper employment, both for his time and fortune, if he please: and he may assure himself, that God, by placing him in that station, never meant to exempt him from the common obligations of society, and give him a license to spend his life in ease and pleasure. God meant assuredly, that he should bear his part in the general commerce of life,

—that he should consider himself not as an individual, but as a member of the community; the interests of which he is under an obligation to support, with all his power;—and that his elevated station gives him no other pre-eminence, than that of being the more extensively useful.

Having thus seen, that we have all some station in life to support—some particular duties to discharge; let us now see in what manner we ought to discharge them.

We have an easy rule given us in scripture, on this head; that all our duties in life should be performed “as to the Lord, and not unto man:” that is, we should consider our stations in life, as trusts reposed in us by our Maker; and as such should discharge the duties of them. What, though no worldly trust be reposed? What, though we are accountable to nobody upon earth? Can we therefore suppose ourselves in reality less accountable? Can we suppose, that God, for no reason that we can divine, has singled us out, and given us a large proportion of the things of this world (while others around us are in need), for no other purpose than to squander it away upon  
our-



ourselves? To God undoubtedly we are accountable for every blessing we enjoy.

It matters not whether these advantages be an inheritance, or an acquisition: still they are the gift of God. Agreeably to their rank in life, it is true, all men should live: human distinctions require it; and in doing this properly, every one around will be benefitted. Utility should be considered in all our expences. Even the very amusements of a man of fortune should be founded in it.

In short, it is the constant injunction of scripture, in whatever station we are placed, to consider ourselves as God's servants; and as acting immediately under his eye; not expecting our reward among men; but from our great Master who is in heaven. This sanctifies, in a manner, all our actions: it places the little difficulties of our station in the light of God's appointments; and turns the most common duties of life into acts of religion.



... To look upon it as an ac-  
countable for every thing we say.  
It matters not what we say, but that we  
are honest, or an acknowledgment of that  
fact is of itself. A person who is not  
in this, it is true, is not honest, but  
acknowledges it; and in doing this pro-  
prietarily, even one should not be reproached.  
It may be that we shall not be honest,  
even the very acknowledgments of a man of letters  
should be looked upon as such.  
In short, it is in the constant repetition of  
the same, in whatever manner we are placed,  
to conduct ourselves as if we were a good man,  
and immediately under his eye; not expect-  
ing our reward, but to be seen; but then our  
reward will be in heaven. I have said this  
in this manner, of our actions; it places the  
the difficulty of our action in the light of  
God's appointments; and turns the most com-  
mon duties of life into acts of religion.

THE END

## LECTURE XXI.

Bad company—meaning of the phrase—different classes of bad company—ill-chosen company—what is meant by keeping bad company—the danger of it from our aptness to imitate and catch the manners of others—from the great power and force of custom—from our own bad inclinations.

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**W**E have now gone through our duty to God, our neighbour, and ourselves; and should proceed, in the order pointed out in the catechism, to consider the Lord's prayer: but it will not, perhaps, be amiss to step a little aside, and but a little, for the sake of one lesson on a subject, which to youth is very important; and without the observance of which, every station will be attended with its peculiar danger: the lesson I mean respects the danger of keeping bad company.

"Evil communication," says the text, "corrupts good manners." The assertion is general: and no doubt all people suffer from such communication; but above all, the minds of youth will suffer; which are yet unformed, unprincipled, unfurnished; and ready to receive any impression.

But before we consider the danger of keeping bad company, let us first see the meaning of the phrase.

In the phrase of the world, good company means fashionable people. Their stations in life, not their morals are considered: and

and he, who associates with such, though they set him the example of breaking every commandment of the decalogue, is still said to keep good company.—I should wish you to fix another meaning to the expression; and to consider vice in the same detestable light, in whatever company it is found; nay, to consider all company in which it is found, be their station what it will, as bad company.

The three following classes will perhaps include the greatest part of those, who deserve this appellation.

The first class may contain all who endeavour to destroy the principles of christianity—who jest on scripture—talk blasphemy—and treat revelation with contempt.

A second class are those, who have a tendency to destroy in us the principles of common honesty and integrity. Under this head, we may rank gamesters of every denomination; and the low, and infamous characters of every profession.

A third class, and such as are commonly most dangerous to youth, includes the long catalogue of men of pleasure. In whatever way they follow the call of appetite, they have  
equally



equally a tendency to corrupt the purity of the mind.

Besides these three classes, whom we may call bad company, there are others who come under the denomination of ill-chosen company: trifling, insipid characters of every kind; who follow no business—are led by no ideas of improvement—but spend their time in dissipation and folly—whose highest praise it is, that they are only not vicious.—With none of these, a serious man would wish his son to keep company.

It may be asked, What is meant by keeping company? The world abounds with bad characters: they meet us in every place; and if we keep company at all, it is impossible to avoid keeping company with such persons.

It is true, if we were determined never to have any commerce with bad men, we must, as the apostle remarks, “altogether go out of the world.” By keeping bad company, therefore, is not meant a casual intercourse with them, on occasion of business; or as they accidentally fall in our way; but having an inclination to consort with them—complying with that inclination—seeking their company,  
when

when we might avoid it—entering into their parties—and making them the companions of our choice. Mixing with them occasionally, cannot be avoided.

The danger of keeping bad company, arises principally from our aptness to imitate and catch the manners and sentiments of others—from the power of custom—from our own bad inclinations—and from the pains taken by the bad to corrupt us\*.

In our earliest youth, the contagion of manners is observable. In the boy, yet incapable of having any thing instilled into him, we easily discover from his first actions, and rude attempts at language, the kind of persons with whom he has been brought up: we see the early spring of a civilized education; or the first wild shoots of rusticity.

As he enters farther into life, his behaviour, manners, and conversation, all take their cast from the company he keeps. Observe the peasant, and the man of education; the difference is striking. And yet God hath bestowed equal

\* See this subject treated more at large in an anonymous pamphlet, on the employment of time.

talents on each. The only difference is, they have been thrown into different scenes of life; and have had commerce with persons of different stations.

Nor are manners and behaviour more easily caught; than opinions, and principles. In childhood and youth, we naturally adopt the sentiments of those about us. And as we advance in life, how few of us think for ourselves? How many of us are satisfied with taking our opinions at second hand?

The great power and force of custom forms another argument against keeping bad company. However seriously disposed we may be; and however shocked at the first approaches of vice; this shocking appearance goes off, upon an intimacy with it. Custom will soon render the most disgusting thing familiar. And this is indeed a kind provision of nature, to render labour, and toil, and danger; which are the lot of man, more easy to him. The raw soldier, who trembles at the first encounter, becomes a hardy veteran in a few campaigns. Habit renders danger familiar, and of course indifferent to him.

But

But habit, which is intended for our good, may, like other kind appointments of nature, be converted into a mischief. The well-disposed youth, entering first into bad company, is shocked at what he hears, and what he sees. The good principles, which he had imbibed, ring in his ears an alarming lesson against the wickedness of his companions. But, alas! this sensibility is but of a day's continuance. The next jovial meeting makes the horrid picture of yesterday more easily endured. Virtue is soon thought a severe rule; the gospel, an inconvenient restraint: a few pangs of conscience now and then interrupt his pleasures; and whisper to him, that he once had better thoughts: but even these by degrees die away; and he who at first was shocked even at the appearance of vice, is formed by custom, into a profligate leader of vicious pleasures—perhaps into an abandoned tempter to vice.—So carefully should we oppose the first approaches of sin! so vigilant should we be against so insidious an enemy!

Our own bad inclinations form another argument against bad company. We have so many passions and appetites to govern; so  
many

many bad propensities of different kinds to watch, that, amidst such a variety of enemies within, we ought at least to be on our guard against those without. The breast, even of a good man is represented in scripture, and experienced in fact, to be in a state of warfare. His vicious inclinations are continually drawing him one way; while his virtue is making efforts another. And if the scriptures represent this as the case even of a good man, whose passions, it may be imagined, are become in some degree cool, and temperate, and who has made some progress in a virtuous course; what may we suppose to be the danger of a raw unexperienced youth, whose passions and appetites are violent and seducing, and whose mind is in a still less confirmed state? It is his part surely to keep out of the way of temptation; and to give his bad inclinations as little room as possible, to acquire new strength.





## LECTURE XXII.

Ridicule one of the chief arts of corruption—  
bad company injures our characters, as well  
as manners—presumption the forerunner of  
ruin—the advantages of good company equal  
to the disadvantages of bad—cautions in  
forming intimacies,

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## LECTURE XXII.

It is one of the chief arts of corruption—  
to company in the character, as well  
as to the advantage of the company equal  
to the disadvantage of the company in  
forming insinuations.

THESE arguments against keeping bad company, will still receive additional strength; if we consider farther, the great pains taken by the bad to corrupt others. It is an undoubted, but a lamentable fact, in the history of human nature, that bad men take more pains to corrupt their own species, than virtuous men do to reform them. Hence those specious arts, that show of friendship, that appearance of disinterestedness, with which the profligate seducer endeavours to lure the unwary youth; and at the same time, yielding to his inclinations, seems to follow, rather than to lead. Many are the arts of these corrupters; but their principal art is ridicule. By this they endeavour to laugh out of countenance all the better principles of their wavering proselyte; and make him think contemptibly of those, whom he formerly respected: by this they stifle the ingenuous blush; and finally destroy all sense of shame. Their cause is below argument. They aim not therefore at reasoning. Raillery is the weapon they employ; and who is there, that hath the steadiness to hear

persons and things, whatever reverence he may have had for them, the subject of continual ridicule, without losing that reverence by degrees?

Having thus considered what principally makes bad company dangerous, I shall just add, that even were your morals in no danger from such intercourse, your character would infallibly suffer. The world will always judge of you by your companions: and nobody will suppose, that a youth of virtuous principles himself, can possibly form a connection with a profligate.

In reply to the danger supposed to arise from bad company, perhaps the youth may say, he is so firm in his own opinions, so steady in his principles, that he thinks himself secure; and need not restrain himself from the most unrestrained conversation.

Alas! this security is the very edge of the precipice: nor hath vice in her whole train a more dangerous enemy to you, than presumption. Caution, ever awake to danger, is a guard against it. But security lays every guard asleep. "Let him who thinketh, he standeth," saith the apostle, "take heed, lest he fall."

Even



Even an apostle himself did fall, by thinking, that he stood secure. “ Though I should die “ with thee,” said St. Peter to his [master, “ yet will I not deny thee.” That very night, notwithstanding this boasted security, he repeated the crime three several times. And can we suppose, that presumption, which occasioned an apostle’s fall, shall not ruin an unexperienced youth ? The story is recorded for our instruction ; and should be a standing lesson against presuming on our own strength.

In conclusion, such as the dangers are, which arise from bad company, such are the advantages, which accrue from good. We imitate, and catch the manners, and sentiments of good men, as we do of bad. Custom, which renders vice less a deformity, renders virtue more lovely. Good examples have a force beyond instruction, and warm us into emulation beyond precept : while the countenance and conversation of virtuous men encourage, and draw out into action every kindred disposition of our hearts.

Besides, as a sense of shame often prevents our doing a right thing in bad company ; it operates in the same way in preventing our doing a wrong one in good. Our character

becomes a pledge ; and we cannot, without a kind of dishonour, draw back.

It is not possible, indeed, for a youth, yet unfurnished with knowledge (which fits him for good company), to choose his companions as he pleases. A youth must have something peculiarly attractive, to qualify him for the acquaintance of men of established reputation. What he has to do, is, at all events, to avoid bad company ; and to endeavour, by improving his mind and morals, to qualify himself for the best.

Happy is that youth, who, upon his entrance into the world, can choose his company with discretion. There is often in vice, a gaiety, an unreserve, a freedom of manners, which are apt at sight to engage the unwary : while virtue, on the other hand, is often modest, reserved, diffident, backward, and easily disconcerted. That freedom of manners, however engaging, may cover a very corrupt heart : and this awkwardness, however unpleasing, may veil a thousand virtues. Suffer not your mind therefore, to be easily either engaged, or disgusted at first sight. Form your intimacies  
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with reserve : and if drawn unawares into an acquaintance you disapprove, immediately retreat. Open not your hearts to every profession of friendship. They, whose friendship is worth accepting, are, as you ought to be, reserved in offering it. Choose your companions, not merely for the sake of a few outward accomplishments—for the idle pleasure of spending an agreeable hour; but mark their disposition to virtue or vice; and, as much as possible, choose those for your companions, whom you see others respect : always remembering, that upon the choice of your company depends in a great measure, the success of all you have learned; the hopes of your friends; your future characters in life; and, what you ought above all other things to value, the purity of your hearts.

with relief: and it draws answers into an  
acquiescence you have never, and hardly it-  
self. Open not your hearts to every question  
of friendship. I say, whose friendship is worth  
accepting, and as you ought to be, reserved in  
forming it. Choose your companions, not  
merely for the sake of a few trifling accom-  
plishments—for this is the disease of the present  
ageable hour; but mark their disposition to  
virtue of vice; and, as much as possible, choose  
those for your companions, whom you see  
always happy: always remembering, that upon  
the choice of your company depends in a great  
measure, the success of all you have learned;  
and hope of your friends: your future con-  
duct in life; and, next you ought above all  
other things to select the party of your friends.

It is a common error to suppose that the  
choice of friends is a matter of indifference,  
and that we may associate with whom we please.  
But the choice of friends is a matter of great  
importance, and one which should be carefully  
considered. The friends we choose will have a  
great influence upon our character and our  
conduct. We should choose friends who are  
virtuous and who will encourage us to be  
virtuous also. We should avoid friends who are  
immoral and who will lead us into sin.

## LECTURE XXIII.

Of prayer in general—its first object is praise—a second, to solicit the pardon of sin—a third, to beg a supply of our wants—one of the advantages of prayer, to preserve in our minds a sense of God, and of our dependance upon him—together with a sense of our duty; to which it contributes not only in a natural, but in a spiritual way—the qualifications of prayer considered—faith—humility—sincerity—resolutions of amendment—charity—to be offered through the merits of Christ—ejaculations of praise—petition—objections—praise, an absurd homage—absurd to inform God of our wants—absurd to attempt by our prayers, to alter a stated course of things.

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**B**EFORE we enter upon the Lord's prayer, which falls next under our examination, it may be proper to consider prayer in general—the object—the advantages—and the qualifications of it; together with some of the most popular objections, which are made to it.

When we consider the infinite distance between God and man—between that Being, whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain; and man, with all the weaknesses of mortality about him; it may at first appear matter of astonishment, that we are allowed any communication with so great a Being. The distinctions, which worldly policy, and worldly pride, make among mankind,—among creatures of the same rank, cannot but raise our ideas still higher of the goodness of God! When we see man treating his fellow-creatures with petulance, and disdain, upon the vile distinctions of station, family, and fortune; what a lesson to us is the goodness of God! Merciful, mild, and condescending to our weaknesses, he listens to, and grants, the petitions of his meanest creatures.

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The first great object of prayer is the praise of God. The works of creation naturally raise it: and the goodness of God, in continuing to us that being, which we cannot ourselves preserve; and those comforts, which we cannot ourselves procure; brings it home to our feelings. It is a duty, which every rational creature owes to his Creator. It is also one of the best sources of our happiness. Simple praise, which consists merely in extolling excellence, is a pleasing theme. But when it is excited by gratitude, it flows with still greater pleasure. Gratitude has a tendency to improve that happy disposition of mind, which feels every enjoyment that it possesses.

A second object of prayer is, to solicit the pardon of our sins. God not only permits, but even enjoins us to do it: and he has appointed penitent prayer, as one of the means of obtaining pardon. It must ever be accompanied by confession; as confessing a fault is one of the first steps towards amending it. In this humiliating employment, we have not only to deplore our own sinfulness; but the lost condition of human nature. Without being truly sensible of this, we can neither acknowledge  
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the means, which God hath used to obviate it; nor be grateful for them.

After thanking God for his past goodness, and endeavouring to make ourselves as worthy as we can of future favours; it is the next object of prayer, to petition a supply of our wants. Among them the principal is, that of the assistance of God's Holy Spirit. It is the constant doctrine of scripture, that, however necessary our own endeavours are, to make us virtuous; they are not sufficient alone to do it. Our own feelings and imperfections, in a thousand instances, must convince us that this is the case. To counteract the depravity of nature, God hath promised us the divine assistance of his Holy Spirit: and earnest prayer is the means he hath appointed for the attainment of that end. We are permitted also to pray for our temporal wants. This is indeed the nicest and most delicate part of prayer. Too thankful for past mercies we cannot be: too earnest in soliciting the pardon of our sins, and God's spiritual assistance, we cannot be: but so short sighted are we, that in begging a supply of our temporal wants, we may easily err. But  
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on these heads, I shall be more full, in the explanation of the Lord's prayer.

Besides praying God for his mercies; asking pardon for our sins; and begging a supply of our wants, which are the primary objects of prayer; there are other great advantages, which are closely connected with it.

Of these the first, is to preserve in our minds a sense of God, and of our dependance on him. When we praise God, we are naturally impressed with an idea of his perfections; and when we beg the forgiveness of our sins, and a supply of our wants; we are as naturally reminded, that we are weak and sinful creatures: that we are continually under the eye of an all-powerful Being; and are in hourly need of his protection and favour. And if our prayers be constant, uniform and fervent; these great truths will be impressed upon our minds, and become the leading principles of our lives.

Prayer is calculated also to impress us with a sense of our duty; and to keep us steady in the practice of it. A virtuous wish is a step towards virtue. A fervent prayer is still a nearer advance. To pray ardently for an increase of virtue, even in a natural way, must  
increase



increase it : and to pray frequently, must tend to preserve it. Indeed, in the whole circle of christian duties, perhaps there is not one, which has a greater effect in forming the heart, than rational devotion.

After the advantages of prayer, let us consider the qualifications of it : or, what concomitant circumstances are necessary to make it an acceptable service to God. It should be founded in faith ; and accompanied with humility, sincerity, resolutions of amendment, and charity. It should also be offered up in the name, and through the merits of Christ.

It should first be founded in faith. It is obvious to common sense, that “ he who cometh to God, must believe that he is ; and that he is a rewarder of them, who diligently seek him : ” otherwise, why should we come to him at all ? We ought therefore to trust his promises, and put up our prayers in the full assurance of being heard. Even men, when their word is plighted, expect this confidence. And shall we approach God with less confidence, than we do man ?

Secondly, our prayers must be accompanied with humility. Humility is expected, even when

when we ask a favour of our fellow-creatures. What humiliation then is due to God, from whom we have every thing to ask; and before whom we have not the smallest merits to plead? An humble heart is in itself a pleasing sacrifice to God. The humility of the publican was half his prayer.

They should be accompanied also with sincerity. Mere lip-service can never please God. It is a mockery of him. Indeed, if our minds are thoroughly impressed with a sense of God's power and goodness; and of our own weakness and dependance; our prayers will of course be sincere: we shall find it less difficult to check the idle wanderings of our thoughts: we shall confess our sins with an heart-felt contrition; and praise God with unfeigned thankfulness. I shall just add, that as we should guard, on one hand, against an inanimate coldness, and insensibility; so ought we, on the other, to avoid all irrational fervour, in our devotions. The effusions of a heated imagination, cannot be a pleasing sacrifice to an all-wise God.

But sincere prayer is of little value in the sight of God, if it be not accompanied with steady resolutions of amendment. If the heart  
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be not improved, devotion is dead. Its fruit is lost. To implore pardon for our sins, and not endeavour to avoid them; is shewing ourselves to be just so much in earnest, as to own we are in the wrong; without attempting to get right.

One thing more is necessary to make our devotions acceptable to God; they should be offered up in the spirit of charity. He who begs forgiveness at God's hands, in an unforgiving temper, may as well omit his prayers. He had better omit them. To his uncharitable temper, he only adds a new offence—that of an unworthy prayer. It is the constant language of scripture, that “with the same measure with which we mete, it shall be measured to us again. Give, and it shall be given unto you. Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.”

But no human qualifications alone can carry our prayers to the throne of grace. We must have other merits, besides our own, to make them acceptable in the sight of God—the all-sufficient merits of our blessed Redeemer. He is the great mediator between God and man. A holy life makes his merits, ours. All our

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prayers

prayers therefore should be offered up in his name, and through his most powerful mediation.

But in the Lord's prayer, no mention is made of the merits of Christ.

It is true; nor could there. When that prayer was composed, the great atonement was not made. How could it then be pleaded? But we are told, it ought to be pleaded, as soon as it was made. "Hitherto," said our Saviour to his disciples, a little before his passion, "have ye asked nothing in my name: but "whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my "name, he will give it you."

When all these qualifications are united; when our prayers are founded in faith—when they are accompanied with humility, sincerity, resolutions of amendment, and charity—and lastly, when they are offered up in the name, and through the merits of Christ; we may assure ourselves, that they will be acceptable in the sight of God.

I shall just add, on this subject, that besides formal prayers, either public or private, a devout mind will find many opportunities of exercising itself, in the midst even of business  
and



and pleasure. An ejaculation of praise, a single petition, raised from the heart, in one devout thought, unaccompanied by any external act, will unquestionably find its way to heaven. This is literally having God in all our thoughts; and making our lives a continual prayer.

As reasonable a duty, however, as prayer is, objections have been made to it.

Praise, it hath been said, is an absurd homage: as if the Almighty Father could be pleased with the empty praises of a poor insignificant race of creatures. We are to do all, it seems, to the glory of God. What glory can God receive from our doings? Doth his name in any respect depend upon the breath of man?

To this objection we answer, that if the real exaltation of God's glory, or if any addition to his happiness, be supposed to be the intention of praise; the idea indeed were very absurd. But certainly with regard to man; no employment can be more adapted to his nature, or in itself more rational, than to praise his Creator. It reminds him of all those great attributes, which, as he praises them, he learns to imitate. It reminds him of that infinite wisdom and power, on which he ought always to



depend. It reminds him of that tenderness, and indulgence, which he has so often experienced, and which he ought ever to praise.

When we are ordered therefore to do every thing for the glory of God, the expression is merely adapted to common acceptation; and alludes to the glory of earthly princes, which good subjects advance by obeying the laws. The highest glory therefore, according to our ideas, which God can receive from his creatures, arises from their obedience to his commands.

But it is absurd, replies the objector, to inform God of our wants: nay such information amounts almost to a denial of his omniscience.

Undoubtedly, if it were the intention of the petitioner to inform God; but this never enters into the idea of a prayer. God hath enjoined us to pray for a supply of our wants, as a mean of receiving it. In what manner prayer is efficacious to this purpose, is not for us to inquire. One thing is very obvious, that dependant creatures ought always to be reminded of their dependant state; and of that Being, from whose bounty they receive every thing they enjoy.

And

And nothing surely can be better calculated than prayer, to promote this wise end.

But is not prayer an absurd attempt to alter the stated course of things? And is it not high presumption to imagine, that God will alter it for the sake of our petitions?

The objection is founded in ignorance. Do we know what is the stated course of things? Do we know whether there even exists what the objector calls a stated course? Or whether God may not reserve all events, as far as free agents are concerned, in a mutable condition, dependant on circumstances? In whatever way our prayers are efficacious, it is not our part to inquire. We have the Almighty's express command for this intercourse with him; and therefore we ought with thankfulness to comply. He who gave the command, knows best how to make the compliance with it effectual.



## LECTURE XXIV.

Occasion on which the Lord's prayer was composed—general idea of it—division into five parts—the first contains an address of praise—explanation of the word Father, when applied to God—of the word heaven.—The second part contains a petition for the general good of mankind—meaning of hallowing God's name—thy kingdom come—thy will be done.

## LECTURE XXIV.

Occasion on which the Lord's prayer was composed—general idea of its division into five parts—the first contains an address of praise—explanation of the word Father, when applied to God—of the word heaven. The second part contains a petition for the general good of mankind—meaning of the word kingdom of God's name—the kingdom come—the will be done.

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HAVING thus considered prayer in general, let us now consider the Lord's prayer.

This prayer was composed by our Saviour, upon a request which his disciples made him; to "teach them to pray, as John taught his "disciples." Much of the substance of it is supposed to have been taken from the Jewish forms, then in use; from which our Saviour, as it appears, selecting proper parts, adapted them to his own purpose. This mode of composing a prayer was agreeable to his usual practice; which was to give as little offence as possible to the prejudices of men. In forming a prayer, therefore, he chose rather to take in part what he found already established, than to compose one entirely anew.

This prayer was not only intended as a form of prayer in itself, but also as a model for our prayers. We have the great lines of rational devotion marked out; to which we may adapt our own exigencies. This seems implied in the introduction; "After this manner pray "ye." As if our Saviour had said, The precise form of words here given you, needs not  
always

always be adhered to ; but let it be your general direction.

The Lord's prayer seems to admit an easy division into five parts.

The first contains an invocation of praise :  
" Our Father, which art in heaven."

The second contains a petition for the general good of mankind ; " Hallowed be thy name ; thy kingdom come ; thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."

The third part contains a petition for temporal blessings : " Give us this day our daily bread."

The fourth, for spiritual : " And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us ; and lead us not into temptation ; but deliver us from evil."

The fifth concludes with a profession of our faith. " For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever,"

## P A R T I.

The first part contains an invocation of praise.  
" Our Father which art in heaven."

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The Jews, as far as appears, were not allowed the use of this address to God. At least they had no idea of it in a christian sense. They were taught rather to address the Deity by some such awful title, as the "Lord Jehovah" —the Lord of Hosts—or the Lord who taketh "vengeance."—His power, rather than his goodness, was the leading character, under which they acknowledged him. But the christian dispensation allows us to address the Deity under the tender name of Father. "We have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." Under the gracious appellation of Father, we not only acknowledge God as the creator, and preserver of the world; but hope from him, as a child from his parent, the supply of our wants, assistance in our difficulties, indulgence to our failings, and pardon for our faults: and these kindnesses in a greater degree, proportioned to his greater goodness, and power.

By the word heaven, the jewish language frequently understands pre-eminence. A city exalted

exalted to heaven, means only a city raised to an extraordinary height of power. When we address God therefore in heaven, we are not taught to conceive him as stationed in any particular place of abode: God is present, we know, on earth, as well as in heaven; every where, as well as any where. When we address ourselves therefore to God in heaven, we mean only to address ourselves to that God, who is omnipotent, and supreme.

## P A R T II.

After the invocation, the prayer begins, in the spirit of christian benevolence, with a petition for the general good of mankind: "Hallowed be thy name—thy kingdom come—thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."

God's name is hallowed, or religiously honoured, when his creatures have just sentiments of him. When we pray therefore, that God's name may be hallowed; we pray, that mankind may have their minds impressed with just ideas of his wisdom, power, justice, and other attri-



attributes. In a word, we pray, that all mankind may love, and fear him, as their great benefactor, and judge,—and that, in the scripture-language, “they may sanctify the Lord “ God in their hearts.”

We farther pray, that mankind may not only have just sentiments of the Deity; but may be partakers also with us in the purity of religion. “Thy kingdom come.”

By kingdom, in the new testament, or the “kingdom of heaven,” is generally meant the christian religion. When John the baptist preached, saying, “the kingdom of heaven is “at hand;” he meant the gospel, or the christian religion, is about to be established. When we pray, therefore, that “God’s kingdom “may come;” we pray, that the christian religion, in its full purity and perfection, may be established throughout the world; as what must be most conducive to the happiness of it. This is yet, we see, far from being the case. Great part of the world never heard of christianity. Great part of it, though they have heard of Christ, yet acknowledge him not. A large portion even of the christian world debase christianity almost into heathenism: and great numbers,



numbers, even where we suppose christianity purely professed, deny the power of it, by leading wicked lives. Great reason therefore have we to pray, that God's "kingdom may come."

—We have ground to hope, from many parts of the prophetic writings, that at length "the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in." And for this event we devoutly pray; "when the day star shall arise to all the world; and the people, which sit in darkness, shall see a great light:" when the whole race of mankind shall join in the psalmist's triumphant song, "the Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice: yea the multitude of the isles shall be glad thereof."

In consequence of mankind's having just notions of God, and a true religion to direct them; we pray, that their lives may be answerable to such advantages; and that God may be obeyed on earth, as far as human frailty will permit, as he is by the angels in heaven: "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."—Angelic obedience we conceive to be perfect: human obedience, we know, is very defective. Lifeless, and inanimate in our devotions—negligent at best in our practice—our  
most

most plausible actions springing often from unworthy motives ; great reason have we to pray, that we, and all mankind may give the best proof of our religious principles, by emulating the prompt obedience of angels ; and “ doing God’s will on earth, as it is done in heaven.”

It is a well known fact that the  
present condition of the  
country is a result of the  
policy of the government  
which has been followed  
for many years. The  
policy of the government  
has been to keep the  
country in a state of  
anarchy and to keep  
the people in a state of  
poverty and ignorance.

## LECTURE XXV.

The third part contains a prayer for the supply of our wants—first of a temporal kind—the necessities of life, all we are allowed to pray for—the fourth part contains a prayer for the supply of our spiritual wants—the forgiveness of our sins—and the assistance of God's Holy Spirit—the phrase “lead us not into temptation,” considered—the fifth part contains an acknowledgement of God's power, and our gratitude—a paraphrase of the whole.

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PART





## P A R T III.

**A**FTER praying for the general good of mankind; we are instructed to pray for the supply of our own wants. These are of two kinds, temporal and spiritual.

And first, we are allowed to pray for temporal things. "Give us this day our daily bread;" which cannot possibly, by any mode of interpretation, extend to more, than the necessaries of life. It is a common analogy in language, to make some principal thing stand for many of the same kind. Thus the word faith often stands for the whole of religion; though it is only a part. And thus the word bread, in the passage before us, stands for all the necessaries of life; of which it is the principal. For the necessaries of life then we are allowed to pray; but not for the superfluities of it. We must pray in general terms; but must not particularize. For spiritual things, we are at full liberty; because here we cannot err: but with regard to temporal, so circumscribed is all our knowledge, that if we go farther, we may run into error; and in a

thousand instances, ask for things, which may prove our ruin. The apostle warns us against those, “ who ask amiss, that they may consume “ it upon their lusts.”

There is something singular in the repetition of the words, this day, and daily ; as if human nature, so apt to err on this subject, were doubly cautioned not to be solicitous to lay up a great store for the future : but, to be satisfied with a moderate provision ; and that we should not seem to form in our hearts, that wicked wish of placing ourselves in a state independant of God, “ Thou fool, this night shall thy “ soul be required of thee ;” is a dreadful sentence upon record against such folly.

#### P A R T IV.

Being permitted, with these restrictions, to pray for temporal things ; we are allowed a larger scope with regard to spiritual. On this head, we have two things to pray for—that God would pardon our past sins ; and assist us in avoiding sin for the future. Both these requests are contained in the following words :

“ For-

“Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them  
“that trespass against us; and lead us not  
“into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

First then, we are to beg of God forgiveness  
of our past sins; and a christian knows, on  
what conditions only they will be forgiven.  
Without a thorough repentance of them—  
such a repentance, as ends in a reformed life,  
we know, it is in vain to expect forgive-  
ness.

Something more also is required. We are  
instructed to approach the throne of God in a  
forgiving temper towards others; when we pe-  
tition forgiveness for ourselves: agreeably to  
those passages of scripture, in which we are  
told, “that unless we forgive others, our  
“heavenly Father will not forgive us;” and  
that, “when we come to the altar, and there  
“remember that we are at enmity with our  
“neighbour; we must first be reconciled to  
“him, before we presume to offer our gift:”  
that is, before we make our supplication to  
God. The forgiveness of others, therefore,  
we see, though not the absolute condition of  
of our own forgiveness, is however a necessary

view to our own forgiveness. U 3 being to our own quali-

qualification. Though alone, it cannot obtain our pardon; yet, at the same time, our pardon cannot be obtained without it. Nay, whoever uses the Lord's prayer in an unforgiving temper; instead of begging a blessing, begs a curse. He begs that God "will forgive him, as he forgives others;" that is, he proposes his own uncharitable temper as the only rule, by which he wishes himself to be judged.

Having thus prayed, that God would forgive our past sins; we next beg his assistance in avoiding sin for the future. It hath already been observed, that in this prayer, no mention is made of the merits of Christ; as the great atonement was not then offered. We may observe also, that no mention is made of the Holy Spirit of God; which was not then promised. And yet even then, we see, men were ordered to pray for the assistance of God; to lead them out of temptation, and deliver them from evil. In what way God assisted his faithful servants under the old dispensation; or how that mode of divine assistance differed from the assistance now afforded us under the dispensation of grace; is a question of very little



little importance. Certain it is, that God always did assist his servants; and never left himself without a witness of his goodness in the moral, as well as in the natural world. But though this prayer was composed before the Spirit of truth was promised; and when man, of course, could not use the petition for God's assistance in that sense, in which it was afterwards used by christians; yet the christian sense ought certainly to be the sense in which it should now be used. When we pray therefore for God's assistance to "deliver us from evil;" we pray for it in that way, in which God hath graciously promised it in the gospel; that is, through his Holy Spirit.

The mode of expression is rather singular in the phrase, "Lead us not into temptation." It immediately occurs, how can God lead us into temptation? "God," St. James tells us, "tempteth no man."

But the phrase, according to the jewish idiom, means only, that God would lead us out of temptation: that he would not suffer us, in the scripture-language, to be "tempted above our strength; but that he would, with the



“temptation, make a way to escape.” The purport of the petition therefore is, that he would graciously conduct us through all the moral difficulties of this life; and that finally, after we have passed our pilgrimage here upon earth, he would take us to himself, safe from all our dangers; and grant us peace in a happy immortality.

Surrounded by dangers, and difficulties of every kind, great reason have we for these petitions. Every object around us—every period of age—every station of life—every temper of mind—our passions—our appetites—our imaginations—our very reason—all conspire in furnishing abundant matter either to mislead or to seduce us. The poor are tempted to dishonesty, and to repine at God: the rich are tempted by wantonness to forget him. The life of business, and the life of leisure, abound equally with temptations. The man of commerce with the world, finds them in company: nor can the recluse avoid them in solitude. Thus surrounded by temptations, human power is insufficient to carry us safely through them. To heaven therefore we must pray for assistance. “With God all things are possible.”

His

His power co-operating with our endeavours, will enable us to meet our adversary on superior ground. "It can lead us out of temptation; and deliver us from evil."

### PART V.

Having thus put up our petitions to God, we conclude with an assurance of our firmest confidence in him. Faith, we know, is one of the greatest requisites of prayer. If we do not believe that God is able to grant our petitions, it is idle to make them. We pray therefore to God—because, "his is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever, and ever." He is the supreme disposer of all events: and his power, like his goodness, is above conception. We have the firmest confidence therefore, that he is both able and willing to grant all our reasonable petitions.

The whole prayer then, according to this explanation, may be thus paraphrased:

O thou beneficent Being, our creator, preserver, and father, have mercy upon the whole race of mankind. May we all have just sentiments of thee. May thy true religion be established

blished throughout the world; and may men feel its influence; live suitably to its precepts; and emulate, in their obedience, the blessed spirits of heaven.—Grant us such a share of this world's good, as thou see'st most proper for us. We ask not for wealth, or power. Grant us the necessaries of life—the rest we submit to thee: and may we never, through the influence of the world, forget our dependance on thee.—Grant, O Lord, that we may make ourselves proper objects of thy mercy and forgiveness. May we have a thorough sense of our own unworthiness; and may that lead us to contrition, penitence, and steady resolutions of amendment. And may we never presume to ask thy forgiveness in an unforgiving temper.—Amidst all the temptations and difficulties of this world, be thou present with us. Let us not be tempted above our strength; but let thy gracious Spirit always conduct us. May we exert our own best endeavours in resisting the temptations which arise from the various deluding objects of the world; and may thy gracious aid render those endeavours successful. So that finally having finished our course, we may, after this state of trial upon earth, be  
received

received into the eternal mansions of thy heavenly kingdom. Hear our petitions, O Lord, which are put up in the fullest confidence and faith in thee. We acknowledge thy power, and trust in thy goodness, for a proper supply of all our wants.





## LECTURE XXVI.

Nature of positive duties—definition of a sacrament—its original meaning—the several parts of the definition explained—sacrament of baptism—significancy of water as a sign—baptism of infants.

WE

LECTURE XXXI.

History of the Republic of the United States  
from its origin to the present time  
by J. C. Smith

1877

W.C.

**W**E have now considered the great duties of faith and obedience ; in which consists the sum of religion. These we commonly call morally right, or right in their own nature.

Besides these, there is another species of duties, which are called positive. In their own nature they are indifferent ; but are rendered binding, because they are appointed by divine authority.

The Jews were burdened with a heavy load of these positive duties. One may almost say, the spirit of the Mosaic law consisted in them. In ceremonies also consisted entirely the religion of the heathens. All they knew indeed of religion was a burthensome ritual, made up of external acts, which had no reference to life, and manners.

Never was any system of religion so free from the burden of ceremonies as christianity ; never was any religion so purely addressed to the heart. The two sacraments, of baptism, and the Lord's supper, are the only ceremonies ordained by Christ ; both certainly very apposite

sute—baptism, as an outward testimony of our entrance into the christian religion; and the Lord's supper, as an outward testimony of our continuance in it. The former, of course, is administered only once; the latter, frequently.

The short account of the sacraments, contained in the catechism, considers three points; the nature of a sacrament in general—the nature of the sacrament of baptism—and the nature of the Lord's supper.

With regard to the nature of a sacrament in general, it is first asked, “How many sacraments Christ hath ordained?”

The answer is, “Two only, as generally necessary to salvation; viz. baptism, and the supper of the Lord.”

This question points chiefly at the papists, who hold seven sacraments—baptism, the Lord's supper, confirmation, matrimony, penance, orders, and extreme unction. Now, as the word sacrament is no where defined in scripture; we have no objection to a dozen sacraments, instead of seven, if the papists choose it: all we contend for, is, that none of them should be placed upon an equal footing with  
with

with baptism and the Lord's supper; which, according to our definition of a sacrament, are the only two that are ordained by Christ.

The word sacrament originally implied the oath which soldiers took to their leader; and under this idea it was first adopted into the language of religion. But its meaning, in the earlier ages, was very indefinite: and we find it used among the writers of the first centuries, to express any thing mysterious in religion. By degrees, it obtained a closer acceptance; and among protestants was, at length, confined merely to baptism, and the Lord's supper. However still, unfortunately, the old idea of a mystery in some degree cleaves to it; and has been of prejudice to one of these rites especially; which in itself seems to be as simple, as it is significant.

We define a sacrament to be “an outward,  
“and visible sign of an inward and spiritual  
“grace; ordained by Christ himself as a  
“mean, whereby we receive the same, and a  
“pledge to assure us thereof.”

In a sacrament, there must first be “an out-  
“ward, visible sign of an inward and spiritual  
“grace;”



“grace;” that is, a sensible representation of some benefit received.

A sacrament must, secondly, be distinguished from other ceremonies, by being “ordained by Christ.” Common ceremonies the church may decree, and abrogate at pleasure. They are useful merely for the sake of order; and under different circumstances, different ceremonies may take place. But a sacrament, as ordained by Christ, is of perpetual obligation.

Lastly, a sacrament is “a mean whereby we receive the grace of God, and a pledge to assure us thereof.”—The gospel, we know, is a gracious covenant between God and man. On our part, the conditions are faith, and obedience. On God’s part, the forgiveness of our sins, and eternal life. Now the sacraments of baptism, and the Lord’s supper, are the appointed means, whereby we receive, or declare our acceptance of these conditions; and our resolution of observing them. And on God’s part, they are a kind of pledge, and security, that these gracious conditions shall be performed. Seals, and signatures, are visible signs, which have in all ages been thought necessary in the execution of a covenant: they

are

are necessary to reduce into a formal act, what would otherwise be only an intention of the mind. In conformity to human ideas, God thought fit to appoint circumcision, as a ratification of the jewish covenant. St. Paul mentions it under the idea of a \* seal, by which that covenant was confirmed.---Under the same idea, the two sacraments were appointed; and may be considered, on God's part, as his seals to the covenant of grace: or (as it is here phrased) "pledges to assure us thereof."

A sacrament, in general, being thus defined, the sacrament of baptism is next considered; in which, if we consider the inward grace, we shall see how aptly the sign represents it.—The inward grace, or thing signified, we are told, is "a death unto sin, and a new "birth unto righteousness:" by which is meant that great renovation of nature, that purity of heart, which the christian religion is intended to produce. And surely there cannot be a more significant sign of this than water, on account of its cleansing nature. As water refreshes the body, and purifies it from all

\* *Rom. iv. 11.*

contracted filth; it aptly represents that renovation of nature, which cleanses the soul from the impurities of sin. Water indeed, among the ancients, was more adapted to the thing signified, than it is at present among us. They used immersion in baptising: so that the child being dipped into the water, and raised out again; baptism with them was more significant of a new birth unto righteousness. But though we, in these colder climates, think immersion an unsafe practice; yet the original meaning is still supposed.

It is next asked, What is required of those who are baptised? To this we answer, “Repentance, whereby they forsake sin; and  
“faith, whereby they stedfastly believe the  
“promises of God, made to them in that sacrament.”

The primitive church was extremely strict on this head. In those times, before christianity was established, when adults offered themselves to baptism, no one was admitted, till he had given a very satisfactory evidence of his repentance; and till, on good grounds, he could profess his faith in Christ: and it was afterwards expected from him, that he should  
prove

prove his faith, and repentance, by a regular obedience, during the future part of his life.

If faith, and repentance, are expected at baptism; it is a very natural question, Why then are infants baptised, when, by reason of their tender age, they can give no evidence of either?

Whether infants should be admitted to baptism, or whether that sacrament should be deferred till years of discretion; is a question in the christian church, which hath been agitated with some animosity. Our church by no means looks on baptism as necessary to the infant's salvation\*. No man acquainted with the spirit of christianity, can conceive that God will leave the salvation of so many innocent souls in the hands of others. But the practice is considered as founded upon the usage of the earliest times: and the church observing, that circumcision was the introductory rite to the jewish covenant; and that baptism was in-

\* *The catechism asserts the sacraments to be only generally necessary to salvation, excepting particular cases. Where the use of them is intentionally rejected, it is certainly criminal.—The Quakers indeed reject them on principle: but though we may wonder both at their logic, and divinity; we should be sorry to include them in an anathema.*



tended to succeed circumcision; it naturally supposes, that baptism should be administered to infants, as circumcision was. The church, however, in this case, hath provided sponsors; who make a profession of obedience in the child's name. But the nature and office of this proxy hath been already examined, under the head of our baptismal vow.



## LECTURE XXVII.

Sacrament of the Lord's supper—its end—significancy of its symbols—the words “verily  
“and indeed taken” explained—frame of  
mind requisite on receiving it—other ends in  
the sacrament, besides those proposed.



HAVING thus considered the sacrament of baptism, the catechism proceeds lastly to the sacrament of the Lord's supper.

The first question is an inquiry into the original of the institution: "Why was the sacrament of the Lord's supper ordained?"

It was ordained, we are informed,—“for the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ; and of the benefits which we receive thereby.”

In examining a sacrament in general, we have already seen, that both baptism, and the Lord's supper, were originally instituted as the “means of receiving the grace of God; and as pledges to assure us thereof.”

But besides these primary ends, they have each a secondary one; in representing the two most important truths of religion; which gives them more force and influence. Baptism, we have seen, represents that renovation of our sinful nature, which the gospel was intended to introduce: and the peculiar end, which the Lord's supper had in view, was the sacrifice of the death of Christ; with all the benefits which arise from it—the remission of our sins—and  
the

the reconciliation of the world to God, "This do," said our Saviour (alluding to the passover, which the Lord's supper was designed to supersede), not as hitherto, in memory of your deliverance from Egypt; but in memory of that greater deliverance, of which the other was only a type: "Do it in remembrance of me."

The outward part, or sign of the Lord's supper, is "bread and wine"—the things signified are the "body and blood of Christ."—In examining the sacrament of baptism, I endeavoured to shew, how very apt a symbol water is in that ceremony. Bread and wine also are symbols equally apt in representing the body and blood of Christ: and in the use of these particular symbols, it is reasonable to suppose, that our Saviour had an eye to the Jewish passover; in which it was a custom to drink wine, and to eat bread. He might have instituted any other apt symbols for the same purpose; but it was his usual practice, through the whole system of his institution, to make it, in every part, as familiar as possible: and for this reason he seems to have chosen such symbols as were then in use; that he might give as  
little

little offence, as possible, in a matter of indifference.

As our Saviour, in the institution of his supper, ordered both the bread and the wine to be received ; it is certainly a great error in the popish religion, to deny the cup to the laity. They say, indeed, that, as both flesh and blood are united in the substance of the human body ; so are they in the sacramental bread ; which, according to them, is changed, or, as they phrase it, transubstantiated into the real body of Christ. If they have no other reason, why do they administer wine to the clergy ? The clergy might participate equally of both in the bread.—But the plain truth is, they are desirous, by this invention, to add an air of mystery to the sacrament, and a superstitious reverence to the priest ; as if he, being endowed with some peculiar holiness, might be allowed the use of both.

There is a difficulty in this part of the catechism, which should not be passed over. We are told, that “ the body and blood of Christ  
“ are verily, and indeed taken, and received  
“ by the faithful in the Lord’s supper.” This expression sounds very like the popish doctrine,  
just



just mentioned, of transubstantiation. The true sense of the words undoubtedly is, that the faithful believer only, verily and indeed receives the benefit of the sacrament : but the expression must be allowed to be inaccurate, as it is capable of an interpretation so entirely opposite to that which the church of England hath always professed.—I would not willingly suppose, as some have done, that the compilers of the catechism meant to manage the affair of transubstantiation with the papists. It is one thing to shew a liberality of sentiment in matters of indifference ; and another, to speak timidly, and ambiguously, where essentials are concerned.

It is next asked, What benefits we receive from the Lord's supper ? To which it is answered, " The strengthening and refreshing  
 " of our souls by the body and blood of Christ,  
 " as our bodies are by the bread and wine."  
 As our bodies are strengthened and refreshed, in a natural way, by bread and wine ; so should our souls be, in a spiritual way, by a devout commemoration of the passion of Christ. By gratefully remembering what he suffered for us, we should be excited to a greater abhorrence of sin, which was the cause of his sufferings.

ferings. Every time we partake of this sacrament, we take a fresh oath to our leader; and, like faithful soldiers, should be animated anew, by his example, to persevere in the spiritual conflict, in which, under him, we are engaged.

It is lastly asked, "What is required of them, who come to the Lord's supper?" To which we answer, "That we should examine ourselves, whether we repent us truly of our former sins—steadfastly purposing to lead a new life—have a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ—with a thankful remembrance of his death; and to be in charity with all men."

That pious frame of mind is here, in very few words, pointed out; which a christian ought to cherish, and cultivate in himself at all times; but especially, upon the performance of any solemn act of religion. Very little indeed is said in scripture, of any particular frame of mind, which should accompany the performance of this duty; but it may easily be inferred from the nature of the duty itself.

In the first place, "we should repent us truly of our former sins; steadfastly purposing  
" to

“to lead a new life.” He who performs a religious exercise, without being earnest in this point; adds only a pharisaical hypocrisy to his other sins. Unless he seriously resolve to lead a good life, he had better be all of a piece; and not pretend, by receiving the sacrament, to a piety which he does not feel.

These “steadfast purposes of leading a new life,” form a very becoming exercise to christians at all times. The lives even of the best men afford only a mortifying retrospect. Though they may have conquered some of their worst propensities: yet the triumphs of sin over them, at the various periods of their lives, will always be remembered with sorrow; and may always be remembered with advantage; keeping them on their guard for the future, and strengthening them more and more in all their good resolutions of obedience.—

But if at any time these meditations arise more properly, than at another, it is when we are performing a rite, instituted on purpose to commemorate the great atonement for sin.

To our repentance, and resolutions of obedience, we are required to add “a lively faith  
“in God’s mercy through Christ; with a  
“thank-

“thankful remembrance of his death.” We should impress ourselves with the deepest sense of humility—totally rejecting every idea of our own merit—hoping for God’s favour only through the merits of our great Redeemer—and with hearts full of gratitude, trusting only to his all-sufficient sacrifice.

Lastly, we are required, at the celebration of this great rite, to be “in charity with all men.” It commemorates the greatest instance of love that can be conceived; and should therefore raise in us correspondent affections. It should excite in us that constant flow of benevolence, in which the spirit of religion consists; and without which indeed we can have no religion at all. Love is the very distinguishing badge of christianity: “By this,” said our great Master, “shall all men know that ye are my disciples.”

One species of charity should, at this time, never be forgotten; and that is, the forgiveness of others. No acceptable gift can be offered at this altar, but in the spirit of reconciliation.—Hence it was, that the ancient christians instituted, at the celebration of the Lord’s supper, what they called love-feasts.

They



They thought, they could not give a better instance of their being in perfect charity with each other; than by joining, all ranks together, in one common meal.—By degrees, indeed, this well-meant custom degenerated; and it may not be amiss to observe here, that the passages \* in which these enormities are rebuked, have been variously misconstrued; and have frightened many well-meaning persons from the sacrament. Whereas what the apostle here says, hath no other relation to this rite, than as it was attended by a particular abuse in receiving it: and as this is a mode of abuse, which doth not now exist; the apostle's reproof seems not to affect the christians of this age.

What the † primary, and what the ‡ secondary ends in the two sacraments were, I have endeavoured to explain. But there might be others,

God might intend them as trials of our faith. The divine truths of the gospel speak for themselves: but the performance of a positive duty rests only on faith.

These institutions also are strong arguments for the truth of christianity. We trace the

\* See I Cor. xi.

† P. 305.

‡ P. 313.



observance of them into the very earliest times of the gospel. We can trace no other origin, than what the scriptures give us. These rites therefore greatly tend to corroborate the scriptures.

God also, who knows what is in man, might condescend so far to his weakness, as to give him these external badges of religion, to keep the spirit of it more alive. And it is indeed probable, that nothing has contributed more than these ceremonies to preserve a sense of religion among mankind. It is a melancholy proof of this, that no contentions in the christian church have been more violent, nor carried on with more acrimony, and unchristian zeal, than the contentions about baptism and the Lord's supper; as if the very essence of religion consisted in this or that mode of observing these rites.—But this is the abuse of them.

Let us be better taught: let us receive these sacraments, for the gracious purposes for which our Lord enjoined them, with gratitude, and with reverence. But let us not lay a greater stress upon them than our Lord intended. Heaven, we doubt not, may be gained, when

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there

there have been the means of receiving neither the one sacrament nor the other. But unless our affections are right, and our lives answerable to them; we can never please God, though we perform the externals of religion with ever so much exactness. We may err in our notions about the sacraments: the world has long been divided on these subjects; and a gracious God, it may be hoped, will pardon our errors. But in matters of practice, we have no apology for error. The great lines of our duty are drawn so strong, that a deviation here, is not error, but guilt.

Let us then, to conclude from the whole, make it our principal care to purify our hearts in the sight of God. Let us beseech him to increase the influence of his Holy Spirit within us, that our faith may be of that kind, "which worketh by love;" that all our affections, and from them our actions may flow in a steady course of obedience; that each day may correct the last by a sincere repentance of our mistakes in life; and that we may continue gradually to approach nearer the idea of christian perfection. Let us do this, disclaiming, after all, any  
merits

merits of our own ; and not trusting in outward observances ; but trusting in the merits of Christ to make up our deficiencies ; and we need not fear our acceptance with God.

F I N I S.

1831

trust of our own; and not trusting in our  
ward abstinence; but trusting in the merits  
of Christ to make up our deficiencies; and we  
and not for our acquaintance with God.





